VAMPIRELLA

the HOTTEST HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE!

Over 50 Of The Best Toys, Games, Books, DVDs And More!

THE MATRIX ILLUSTRATED: Burlyman Gallery

SWAMP THING

HORROR MOVIE MAYHEM

HELL HOUSE

HIP-HOP SAMURAI

STUPIDEST ANGEL

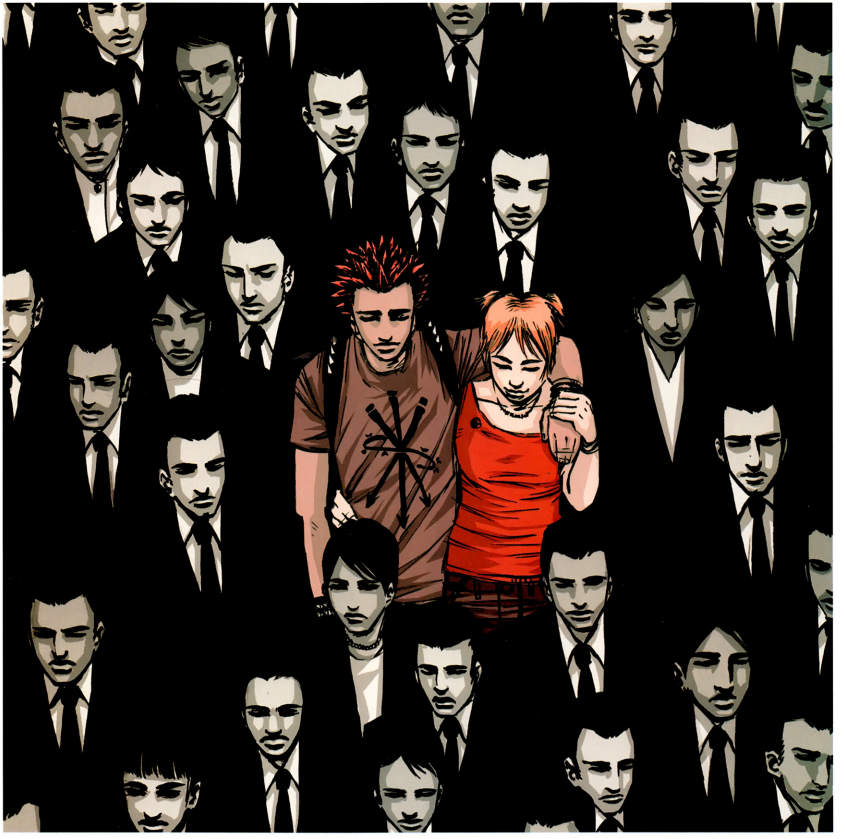
TWO ORIGINAL COMICS: BRIAN WOOD & DEAN HASPIEL KICKSTART IT

SWORD OF DRACULA TAKES AIM AT VAMPIRELLA

VAMPIRELLA MAGAZINE #8
$3.95 U.S.
00811
0 27172 21030 3
www.vampirella.com

MOONSTONE
HORROR
KOLCHAK:
The Night Stalker
MOONSTONE
MONSTERS:
S.R.A.V.E.
moonstonebooks.com

"I'm not who you want me to be."



DEMO

CREATED BY BRIAN WOOD AND BECKY CLOONAN

A twelve-issue, monthly series about love, loss, and the joy of finding your own way in life.

"touching" - ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY / "more human than mainstream comics dare to be" - VARIETY
"intense and profound... enthralling. The emotion is as raw as the action." - WIZARD
"best first issue of 2003" - THE FOURTH RAIL / "top ten best of 2003 (#8)" - THE OKLAHOMAN

www.ait-planetlar.com / www.brianwood.com / www.estrigious.com/becky

AIT★PLANET LAR
COMICS FOR GRAPHIC NOVELS

FLAPPERS, SPEAKEASIES AND ... THE UNDEAD?

THE NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL FROM MAD YAK PRESS

the SUPERNATURALISTS

BY PATRICK NEIGHLY AND JORGE HEUFEMANN • 160 PAGES $9.95

NOW AVAILABLE IN FINER COMIC SHOPS EVERYWHERE!

"A deftly told blend of crime and horror genres."
Steven Grant, *Permanent Damage*

"An author who knows when to damn the torpedoes."
The Comics Journal

"A great cast of characters!"
Randy Lander

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM MADYAK PRESS: WWW.MADYAKPRESS.COM

mad yak press

BLOODBANK

features

20 SWAMPED
JOSHUA DYSART CREEPS INTO WRITING *SWAMP THING*

22 DON'T MESS WITH THE MAN
FROM *THE MATRIX* TO COMICS, THE WACHOWSKI BROS. DO IT ALL

28 FIENDS IN GOOD STANDING
AUTHOR CHRIS MOORE SETS UP YULETIDE HORROR AND MORE

30 WANT & NEED
LEAVE IT TO VAMPIRELLA TO FIND THE PERFECT GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

comics

9 VAMPIRELLA: KICKSTART MY HEART
LOVE MAKES A GIRL DO CRAZY THINGS

42 VAMPIRELLA: WITNESS
INSTANT CROSSOVER: *SWORD OF DRACULA*

departments

06 VAMPED
THUS SPAKE VAMPI

07 SCARLET LETTERS
WORDS TO LIVE BY

08 AT STAKE
SUCCULENT MORSELS FOR YOU

35 NEW BLOOD
YOUR DOORWAY TO THE BEYOND

36 THE VAULT
HAUNTED HOUSES, HIP-HOP SAMURAI, AMERICAN ELVES & MORE

36 FLESH & BLOOD
HELL HOUSE WELCOMES YOU

47 SUCKERS
GUEST REVIEWER: KAGAN MCLEOD ON *BLACK MAGIC*

49 LUNA CHICKS
MONSTER MAN'S AIMEE BROOKS

ART: DEAN HASPIEL

VAMPED

ART BY ENRIQUE BRECCIA. © DC COMICS

Happy Holidays! No matter what you celebrate, this time of year should be fun and joyous and wonderous and full of frivolity!

Naturally, you should have kicked off your Holiday Season with our favorite day of the year, Halloween! Let's see how you got dolled up. Send along your costume picks. We'll have some fun with those! I'm particularly proud of our intrepid crew for this issue's gift picks. Combing the highways and byways, the gang pulled together some fascinating... things. Some are as sexy as sexy can be, some are cutthroat, some are questionable, but there's something for everyone. In that, there is no doubt. Show your loved one how much you care. And oh, there's so, so much caring going on here!

I think I have a favorite new Luna Chick in this month's entry. She's not one of our regulars, but I think you'll like her. Amiee Brooks is a young actress who knows that to vamp it up is more fun than anything else. She loves playing the bad girl, and with her sweet looks, she gets to be the *very* bad girl. Femme fatale with a fatal fling. Her *Monster Man* flick is out on DVD.

Lots of reading to set you up for long, cold wintery nights. If you haven't met Chris Moore yet, you should. From his *Bloodsucking Fiends* novel, right up to his *Stupidest Angel*, he twists and turns words to delight and shock.

You can cuddle up with *Swamp Thing* writer Josh Dysart to keep you warm at night. Dream of the hot bayou as the magic seeps in and takes you over.

Naturally, for me, I'd like a "Burlyman" to cuddle up to on those dreary days. Luckily, there's plenty of that to go around!

As the nights get longer and the days slowly drift into cloud-covered moments, I'm looking forward to playing in the shadows.

Happy Holidays, indeed.

Vampirella

VAMPIRELLA

EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER Jonathan Rheingold
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Yoshi Aino

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Maureen McTigue
ART DIRECTOR Rommel Alama

ASSISTANT EDITOR Bon Alimagno
WEBMASTER Jason Brightman

THANKS:
Jess Bansal, Matt Brady, Cindy Chapman, Beth Colla, Lee Dawson, Toni Deaso, Sean Fernald, Scott Jackson, Sean Keeley, Skip Moriarty, Adam Philips, Peter "The Wizard" Possenti, Pamela Thomas, Joe Venegas, Yoko Wantanabe, Jim Womack, Brett Wornock, Ryan Yount, Erica Zonder

ADVERTISING SALES David Gallaher
Contact david@davidgallaher.com
1-800-436-0556

CIRCULATION/MARKETING DIRECTOR Richard Fogel
SINGLE COPY SALES MANAGER Richard Ciotta
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Dennis M. Wheeler
DIRECTOR OF PRE-PRESS Phil Dhom

PUBLISHER Stanley Harris
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Warren Sherman

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES
1115 Broadway, New York, NY 10010
(212) 807-7100; FAX (212) 620-7787
Email: comics@harris-pub.com
Website: www.vampirella.com

COVER CREDITS
Newsstand Vampirella Cover cover by Lorinda Sullivan
Main illustrated cover by Christopher Shy
Alternate illustrated cover by Dean Haspiel
Model cover photograph by Lorinda Sullivan

VAMPIRELLA COMICS MAGAZINE #8
is published by Harris Publications, Inc.
1115 Broadway, New York, NY 10010

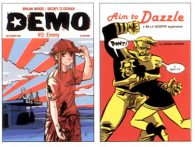
© 2004 Harris Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

PRINTED IN CANADA.

Vampirella is © and ® Harris Publications, Inc. Sword of Dracula © 2004 Jason Henderson & Greg Scott
All outside material is © their respective owners and used with permission.

CONTRIBUTORS

The first Vampirella story this issue, "Kickstart My Heart" (page 9), is brought to us by two mainstays of the "indie" comics movement, **Brian Wood** and **Dean Haspiel**. We've covered Brian's work beginning way back in issue 3, and continue to follow his projects, eagerly awaiting the new *Couriers* title. Dean is a comic book man's man, creating his own titles like *Billy Dogma* as well as slipping easily into superhero projects. We interview him in At Stake on page 8.



Kagan McLeod is a Toronto-based illustrator who is also the creator of the most-awesome *Infinite Kung Fu* comic book, wherein he does reviews such as the one he does on page 47 for our Suckers column this month. We dig him and his comics and his reviews. So, there you go. Visit www.kaganmcleod.com.

Regular contributors **Jim Catapano**, **Patrick Keller** and **Tom LaSusa** are joined by **Chris Lamb**, a writer for popimage.com among other things. In NYC by way of Alabama, Chris brings along Simon Fraser for the ride in Flesh & Blood on page 41. And this month, Jim reads, Patrick hits the *Swamp* and Tom goes for Moore.

Due to space concerns this issue ('cause we're chock fulla good stuff), we had to split our "Instant Crossover" with *Sword of Dracula* (page 42) between now and next issue. So now you get to be teased by the luscious art of **Greg Scott** and intriguing tale by **Jason Henderson**.

BILLY DOGMA © D. HASPIEL; DMDE © B. WOOD & B. CLOONAN

SCARLET LETTERS

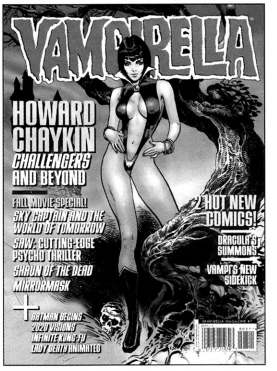
CALLS IN THE DARKNESS

Dear Scarlet Letters,
Joyce Chin's art in *Vampirella* #7 was outstanding! Although I am your average color comic lover, I am very critical of black & white comic art. Joyce knows exactly how to balance the darks and lights in non-color artwork. I see nothing but big things in her future and would like to see more of her great work here in *Vampirella*.
Brendan Walsh
Chicago, IL

Joyce loves Vampirella, Brendan, and we're just figuring out what she can do for us next.

I had a blast reading *Vampirella Magazine* #7 this evening. The highlights of your magazine were the *Lady Death: The Motion Picture* review. This is one must buy DVD that will be added to my collection. I was completely blown away with the artwork in "The Robin Syndrome." Vampirella couldn't have looked better. I used to be a great fan of Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg* and to see a full-blown article in your magazine had me smiling from ear-to-ear! Your feature on *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* was done with excellence and it's hard to believe that the actors/actresses performed behind a blue screen and everything else was added on. I was quite surprised on the audience reaction when I went to see it, not too many people were impressed. I think, given time, this movie may become a cult classic and I hope they do a sequel. Bravo on "Monster Cops v. Vampirella." Who would have ever thought Frankenstein, Dracula and the Wolfman would become cops and meet up with the ultimate goddess herself, Vampirella? Another excellent issue!
Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, CA

Paul, as always, it's a pleasure to hear from you! And we have to admit, #7 is one of our favorite issues, too!



Dear Scarlet Letters,
I really love Vampirella, and got numbers 3, 4, 5 of the magazine, but I want to see more color comics like "Vampirella Must Die." I love color comics of Vampirella. I'd also like to see Adam Van Helsing come back. It looked to me that in the old Vampirella books, Adam was really in love with Vampirella. I heard somewhere that some evil vampire or Dracula killed Adam's father, Conrad Van Helsing, and Adam had to drive a wooden stake into his heart to put him to rest so he didn't come back as a vampire. Is that true? In the movie *Vampirella*, the evil Vlad Dracul killed Vampirella's father and fled to the planet earth in I think the 17th Century and became Count Dracula. Vampirella followed Vlad to earth and landed on our planet in the 20th Century when we started sending the Space Shuttle into earth orbit. I would like to see Vampirella battle Dracula again, and join Marvel Comics heroes like Punisher, Wolverine and the Hulk. I'd like to know how Vampirella met Tina, and why she left Adam Van Helsing. What happened to Adam? I have always loved Vampirella and I'm glad she's back.
John Pilauskas
Bethlehem, PA

So many questions, so much history, John. Vampirella's background is vast and it would take this entire page to discuss it. But in each magazine, you'll learn something more about our favorite gal.

Dear Scarlet Letters,
I'm a huge Vampirella fan. My favorite books are the *Shadowhawk* crossovers and the *Dracula Wars*.

I had to stop buying comics in 1995 because it became a "$100 every three weeks" habit. Unfortunately for me I stopped at just the wrong time because as it turned out there was a crossover explosions. I love them! My dream crossover is Vampirella with KISS. That would be incredibly cool.

Do you offer a Vampirella catalogue? I hope you can help me.
John Raines
TN

Thanks John! Look for more spectacular crossovers including Vampirella/Witchblade: Union of the Damned *in stores now! Also, for all your Vampirella merchandise needs, check our store on vampirella.com!*

Dear Scarlet Letters,
What was up with Bruce Williamson, that guy who wrote that awful letter to you guys?! He's got a problem with "fat women" who "embarrass themselves and disgust others"?! Well, lemme tell him something: he may think the "calorically challenged" shouldn't feel any pride about their bodies, but women do just fine going unappreciated by the shallow. Sorry if I sound a little peeved. I fought long and hard to lose weight and it isn't something that happens overnight. For some people, it takes a lot of determination and I just hate it when men can't understand that.
Michelle Dorn
NJ

It's ironic that in that same issue where Mr. Williamson's letter ran, we ran an interview with author Andrew Fox and he spoke of his own calorically challenged lead characters in the Fat White Vampire Blues.

Beyond that, we salute your efforts and respect your thoughts on this matter. Anyone else?

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! DROP US A LINE ANY WAY YOU CAN!

SCARLET LETTERS, VAMPIRELLA COMICS MAGAZINE, 1115 BROADWAY 8TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10010, OR VIA E-MAIL AT COMICS@HARRIS-PUB.COM

AT STAKE

SUCCULENT MEDIA MORSELS

SMALL PRESS, BIG DREAMS

"And where's your trade?" was a question asked more than once at this year's **SPX**, one of the nation's largest gatherings of small press and independent comic creators and fans. Once a mini-comic bastion, SPX 2004 was more a market for graphic novels, reflecting the trend favoring that format.

While the show lacked a breakout hit, many noteworthy books made their debut. The *SPX 2004 Anthology* sold out—good news for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund which receives the proceeds. Sporting a gripping cover by Steve Lieber, the anthology contains wildly diverse stories tackling the theme of War.

Dash Shaw followed up his underground *Love Eats Brains* series with a *Brains* graphic novel of all-new material taking advantage of the longer format. Jeffrey Brown departs from his autobiographical work into superhero territory with *Big Head*, a masterful satire of the genre.

Mike Mignola and Jeff Smith hosted two of the show's most packed events. Mignola, with collaborator Eric Powell (*The Goon*), held a freewheeling Q&A session where he revealed he planned to kill Hellboy... twice. It might take a while: Mignola is releasing his "epic series of miniseries" over the next year-plus.

Jeff Smith opened his presentation with a master class in comics storytelling, using examples from *Dark Knight Returns*, *Maus* and work by Chris Ware to demonstrate the uniqueness of the medium. He then compared those works with his own, pointing out what he learned and how he used those lessons in *Bone*. Smith also spoke about Scholastic Publishing's reprinting, now in full color. Finally, showing the cast on his arm, he talked about how six months of working on a 200-page Captain Marvel graphic novel for DC has done more damage to him than over a decade's worth of work on the Bone cousins.

SPX also supports the Ignatz Awards, named for George Herriman's classic *Krazy Kat* character, recognizing excellence in independent comics and cartooning. Craig Thompson took home two, Outstanding Artist and Graphic Novel, for *Blankets*, while Carla Speed MacNeil's *Finder* took Outstanding Series. Surprising newcomer *Teen Boat*, the irreverent adventures of a teen who happens to also possess the powers of a boat (no, really) won Best Debut, an award voted on by festival attendees. —BA

HORROR HIGHLIGHTS

IDW has become the place for illustrated horrors, and Steve Niles is their go-to guy. Check out these entries into the creepy hall of fame:

QUEEN OF SCREAMS

Losing Fay Wray this year (August 2004) was a bad hit, but to lose another Scream Queen—and what a scream!—is more than horror history can bear. Janet Leigh, a young under-contract-starlet, was chosen by Alfred Hitchcock to play his doomed leading lady in the classic *Psycho*. The "shower scene" became one of the most popular movie scenes in history, causing Leigh and a legion of others to take baths. And while she appeared in such classic films as *Touch of Evil* and *The Manchurian Candidate*, it is for her Oscar-nominated role in *Psycho* that she is most famous.

DINO & ME

Dean Haspiel is a staple of independent comics. When he's not cracking up his fellow creators, "Dino!" keeps his readers in stitches with *Billy Dogma*. *Opposable Thumbs* and more for which he's been nominated for the Eisner Award for Talent Deserving Wider Recognition. He illustrates the first Vampirella tale this issue. — BA

What particular look and feel were you going for in drawing Vampirella?

Since half of "Kickstart My Heart" is a modern spy thriller and the other half is a tragic monster romance, my task was to gel two genres. There being no way in hell I could ape classic Vampirella, ala Frank Frazetta, Neal Adams and Tom Sutton, the goal I wanted to achieve was good "bad girl" art by keeping the action saucy and the ink line lush. Plus, I've been itching to add grey tones to my art, which is a graphic staple for horror magazines.

How did you hook up with Brian Wood?

Brian Wood and I lived near each other in Brooklyn. Regular bike rides around Prospect Park used to send me down his block and, one day, I recognized Brian chilling on his stoop. We talked shop and he was cool. After reading his spare yet moving stories (with collaborator Becky Cloonan) in *Demo*, I wanted to work with him. When the opportunity to draw a Vampirella story became available, I gave Brian a shout and asked if he would write me something. After one brainstorm on the phone, a week later I had a great script to draw.

Some younger creators think you're the life of the party. Are you?

Bob Fingerman once said to me "The worst advertisement for getting old is old people." I'm getting old. Heck, I was old seven years ago when I attended my very first SPX! But, that never stopped me from stripping! And, in my declining years, it still doesn't today. Besides, I'm not fond of clothes. Unless some chucklehead flexes a nightstick, flashes a badge and/or has health insurance, most folks won't stop you for being who you are. Especially not at SPX where they champion individuality. Shirt be gone!

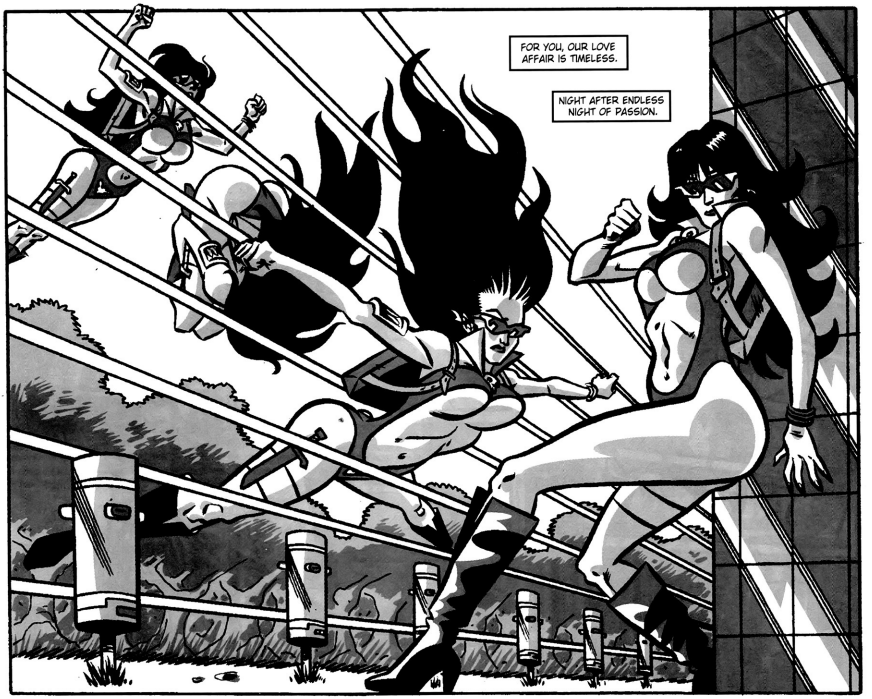
What are your all-time three favorite comics?

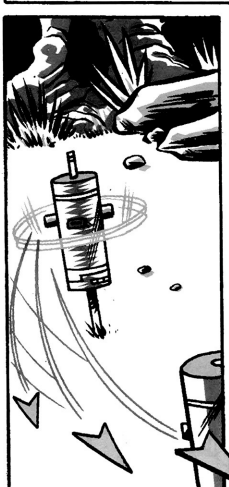
Stan Lee & Jack Kirby's *The Fantastic Four*, Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!*, Frank Miller's *Sin City*.

JANET LEIGH PHOTO © UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

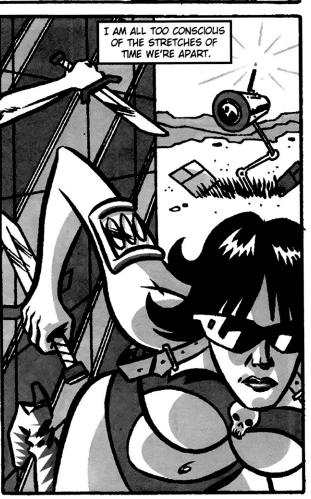
DEEP APPALACHIA.
5:56PM
DUSK IN 23 MINUTES.
I'M RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. BEARING TWO DEGREES EAST SOUTH-EAST. STRUCTURE HIT IN 30 MINUTES.
SOON, LOVER. THIS TIME WILL BE OURS.
VAMPIRELLA in
KICKSTART My Heart

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?
HOW LONG SINCE WE FIRST KISSED? SINCE YOU HELD ME CLOSE AND MADE ME YOURS?
SOME DAYS IT FEELS LIKE HOURS. MINUTES.
OTHER TIMES IT FEELS LIKE CENTURIES.
HOW I LONG FOR ANOTHER NIGHT WITH YOU, MY LOVE.


FOR YOU, OUR LOVE AFFAIR IS TIMELESS.
NIGHT AFTER ENDLESS NIGHT OF PASSION.



I ENVY YOU FOR THAT.


I AM ALL TOO CONSCIOUS OF THE STRETCHES OF TIME WE'RE APART.

WITH EACH PASSING YEAR IT GETS MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT.
YOU ARE ALWAYS IN MY THOUGHTS. EVEN WHEN I AM FAR AWAY, I KEEP YOU CLOSE TO MY HEART.
I PLAN WAYS FOR US TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN.
IF ONLY FOR ONE MORE NIGHT.
I'LL TAKE THE RISKS.

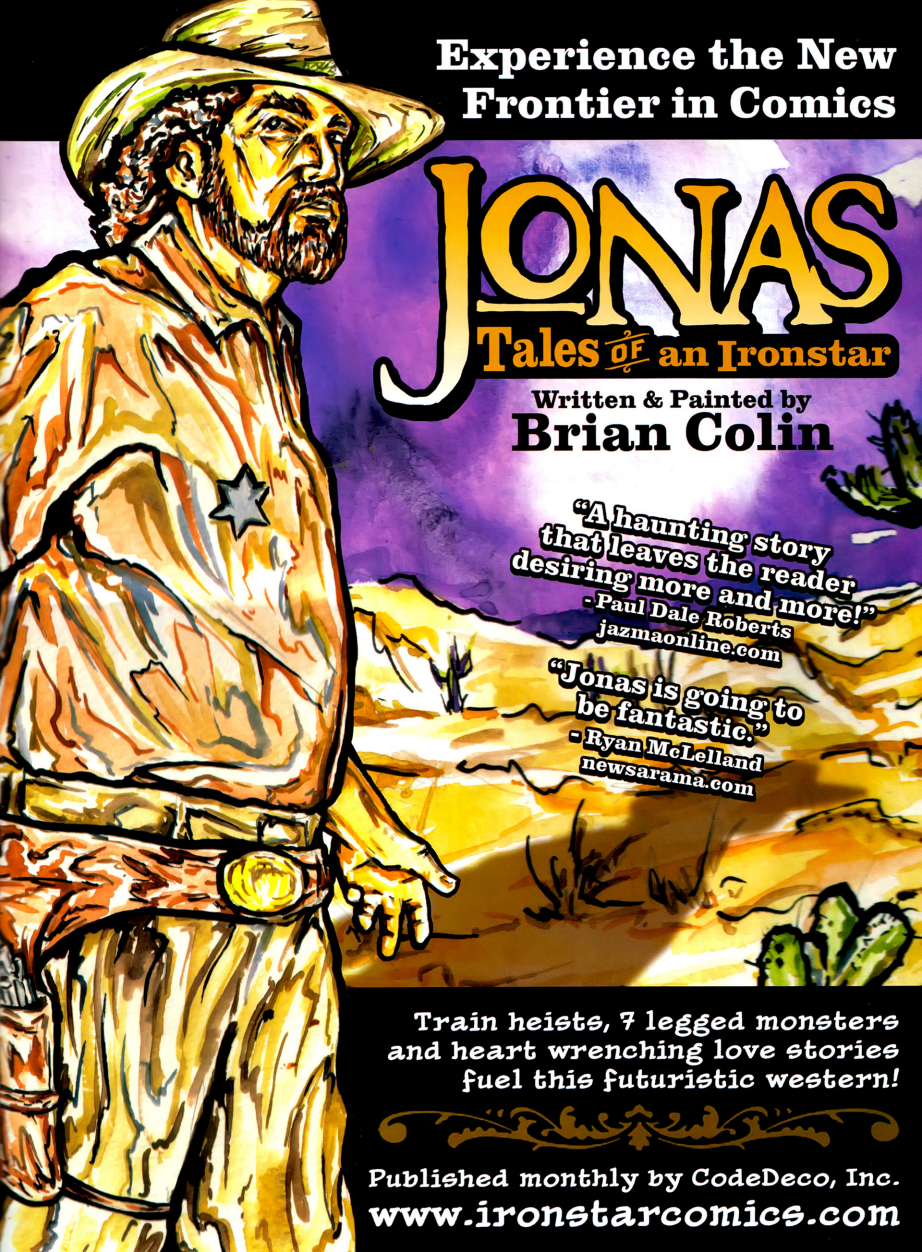
SNAP
CRACK
IT'S WORTH IT. FOR US.

OOPS.

JUST AS I LEFT YOU.

YOU SLEEP SO SOUNDLY, SO PEACEFULLY.
YOU FORGET THE PAIN AND TURMOIL OF THE WORLD.
IN THAT WAY, YOU ARE TRULY BLESSED.
UNAWARE OF ANYTHING SAVE FOR THESE NIGHTS TOGETHER, WHERE I, TOO, CAN SHED THE CARES OF THIS LIFE AND LOSE MYSELF IN US.
MY LOVE.
YES.

MORNING BREAKS, ALL TOO SOON.
AND AS ALWAYS, THE DEEP SLEEP CLAIMS YOU FOR ITS OWN.
BUT ONLY UNTIL I COME FOR YOU AGAIN.
SOMMEIL BIEN, MON AMOUR.
WRITER: BRIAN WOOD
ARTIST: DEAN HASPIEL
LETTERS: MIKE CONLEY
FIN.


Experience the New Frontier in Comics
JONAS
Tales of an Ironstar
Written & Painted by
Brian Colin
"A haunting story that leaves the reader desiring more and more!"
- Paul Dale Roberts
jazmaonline.com
"Jonas is going to be fantastic."
- Ryan McLelland
newsarama.com
Train heists, 7 legged monsters and heart wrenching love stories fuel this futuristic western!
Published monthly by CodeDeco, Inc.
www.ironstarcomics.com

Kicking off his run in issue #9, Dysart tells a bitter-sweet love story.

INTO THE MURK

From Vigilantes to Demons to Elemental Creatures, JOSH DYSART Steps Deep in the Comics Writing Fray

BY PATRICK KELLER

SWAMP THING ART BY ENRIQUE BRECCIA © 2004 DC COMICS

It all began in the swamp. No, that's only half true. He had a life before the swamp, but the life after was so much… different. Bigger. Many fear him; some worship him. His powers are immeasurable. Only the foolish, the naïve, the hopelessly overambitious seek to challenge him and his legacy.

His name… is Alan Moore. What, you had someone else, someTHING big and mossy in mind, perhaps?

So, as it happens, does Joshua Dysart. Both Moore and his *Swamp Thing* loom large on the young writer's mind these days, as he has just picked up the reins on the character's latest series (following a successful launch by *Losers* writer Andy Diggle), where, even two decades later, Moore's shadow is still overwhelmingly felt. "It's scary, but rewarding," Dysart admits. "I'm using some of the most amazing creative decisions in the history of our medium as my given tools. A walking conscious eco-system, The Green, the Journey of the Initiate… it's all here. There's very little stupid shit in [*Swamp Thing*'s] past."

Dysart (l) and *ST* artist Enrique Breccia

Not that there isn't a downside. "Unfortunately this also means I'll be judged based on established criteria. Much is expected. It's hard to catch an audience off-guard when they're firmly entrenched in what their notion of the book should be."

A run on the industry's most famous vegetable is only the latest development in the writer's ongoing success story. After bursting onto the scene with Image's *Violent Messiahs*, Dysart went on to pen a sequel to that book, as well as a *Van Helsing* one-shot for Dark Horse and *Demon: Driven Out* for DC. It could almost be called an "overnight" success, if night happened to last about eight years. "The lean years lasted from 1998 until about six months ago," Dysart reveals. Yet his passion for comics has kept him in pursuit of the dream of one day creating full-time. "I knew I wanted to do comics when I first saw Tone [Rodriguez]'s pencils for *Violent Messiahs*. I had been toying with comics since I was young, but never seriously. Then I saw my first scripted page drawn by Tone. I thought, 'Wow, that's an amazing artistic game to play. I wonder if I could make a living having great artists draw what I tell them to?'

"The simplicity of the components [in comics] reminds us that a still visual can actually communicate sound, scent, motion… the whole of human experience. If I'm reading a well-drawn scene in the rain, I can actually hear the rain. That's an amazing power the medium has."

Born from an idea by *Chassis* creator William O'Neill, who then passed the ball off to Dysart and Rodriguez, *Messiahs* became nothing less than a phenomenon. Set in the dystopian metropolis of Rankor Island, the book follows headstrong police detective Cheri Major, who is hot on the trail of a hulking serial killer named Citizen Pain. Or, as Dysart puts it, "it's about this whacked broad with deep-rooted emotional issues and the nine-foot bulletproof murderer she's hunting, who also happens to be in love with her."

Though the book would launch his career, its life was fraught with pain. "My girlfriend and my best friend started dating while I was writing, and I started to think about the cruelty of situations as opposed to the cruelty of people," Dysart says. "Soon after, I came to the conclusion that God was against us." (Ouch!)

"That's something I don't really feel anymore," he admits. "Sorta. Anyway, *Violent Messiahs* wrote itself at that point." The book found an immediate and enthusiastic audience, but subsequent issues were fraught with delays and personality conflicts. "The series is flawed in many ways, and the relationships amongst the various creators around the book certainly affected its full creative potential," Dysart notes. Still, he says proudly, "I packed more spirit into that work than I've found for anything else since. So no regrets. Something worked there that I'm still looking for again."

A handful of shorter projects followed, including the sequel, *Violent Messiahs: Lamenting Pain*. Dysart also worked on the film adaptations of *Messiahs* and *Evil Ernie*, but his next big break came with the DC miniseries, *Demon: Driven Out*, which found Jack Kirby's rhyming yellow fellow away from his usual foil Jason Blood and tied to a young Japanese street racer. Dysart says that he enjoyed removing Etrigan from his usual surroundings. "It was unique because, while Blood and Etrigan have been separated before, the Demon has never entered a new host. Ultimately this means Blood has failed at being the demon's keeper. His sins are out there in the world. That's interesting to me."

With *Driven Out* under his belt, Dysart was now officially on DC's mind when it came time to find a writer to guide their prized man of moss through the Green once again. The character had languished following the cancellation of the *Swamp Thing* series starring the original character's daughter. The company tested the waters for a return of the original with Diggle's storyarc and found itself with a hit, albeit a hit with an overcommitted writer. Meanwhile, Dysart was busy pitching an ill-fated (so far) Ragman miniseries, and Vertigo's editors snatched him up, which the writer almost believes was fate. "*Swamp Thing* premiered in the month and year of my birth. We are exactly the same age, the title and I. For what that's worth."

Not surprisingly, Dysart sees this latest assignment as a continuation of themes he began some time ago. "*Swamp Thing* has the potential to bring out that same creative sense of freedom that *Violent Messiahs* gave me, simply because I feel a deep attachment to the notion of a walking eco-system with the soul of a man named Alec Holland rattling around inside of it. Though the main characters from *Messiahs* and *Swamp Thing* are very different, there's still a great deal of Job in Alec. I've been handed this glorious metaphor about the way our consciousness is trapped in matter — and this fits right into my perennial themes. So all those elements make this a natural progression for me. I hope I don't screw it up."

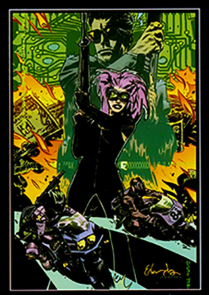
Dysart is clearly very fond of the character. "I love it all, no bullshit," he says. "It's a crazy, interesting comic book. Even the whacked-out stuff has been endearing."

"I packed more spirit into that work," Dysart says of *Violent Messiahs*.

VIOLENT MESSIAHS ART BY TONE RODRIGUEZ

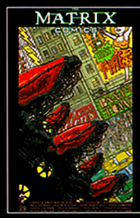
HIGHER CONCEPTS

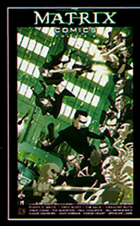
THEY FREED YOUR MIND WITH THE MATRIX. NOW, THE WACHOWSKI BROTHERS ARE SET TO DO IT AGAIN—WITH BURLYMAN ENTERTAINMENT. BY BON ALIMAGNO



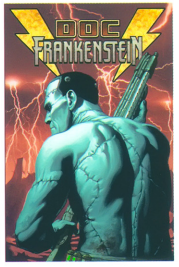
Contributors to *The Matrix* comics are vast (from upper left, clockwise): John Van Fleet, Ted McKeever, Dave Dorman, Paul Chadwick, Geof Darrow, Kaare Andrews, Keron Grant, Troy Nixey, Tommy Lee Edwards, Bill Sienkiewicz

You'd think for the Wachowski Brothers, starting their own comic book company would be nothing to be concerned about. Yet for the creators of the hugely successful *Matrix* films, their ambitions for Burlyman Entertainment might be termed humble. "Our goal is 'Let's not lose money'," Burlyman editor Spencer Lamm jests. "Let's keep this as fun as we can, make sure the books are as good as they can be from cover to back and not get caught up in the round wheel of trying to make huge money." This even despite the runaway success of Burlyman's first release, *The Matrix Comics Volume 1* which sold 60,000 copies, a huge number for a trade paperback book.





BURLYMAN ENTERTAINMENT



Steve Skroce gives life to the new Monster. *Doc Frankenstein* tells of the creature as Mary Shelley intended: intellectual, strong and out in the open world.

NEIL GAIMAN TOOK A YEAR, BUT I FINALLY CRACKED HIM.

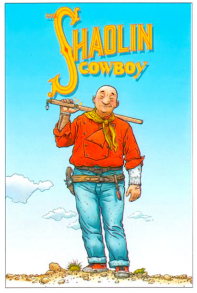
Lamm remembers a time when such success looked doubtful. In the late '90s, the Wachowskis asked Lamm, who they first met earlier in the decade while working on *Ectokid* for Marvel Comics' Barkerverse line, to help put together web comics based on their then-unknown concept. "It was a hard sell in 1998, which I always like to remind people of. I would call up people and send them the script and storyboards and they would come back to me and say, 'Isn't this like *Johnny Mnemonic*?' But even then, we were just going after everyone. We got Ted McKeever [*Metropol*]. Bill Sienkiewicz [Batman] came on. We got who we wanted with few exceptions just based on persistence. Neil Gaiman [*The Sandman*] took a year, but I finally cracked him. It all changed when the first film came out."

By the time the final two movies arrived in theatres, WhatIsTheMatrix.com was hosting work by such diverse talents as David Lapham (*Stray Bullets*), Paul Chadwick (*Concrete*) and Peter Bagge (*Hate*)—all available for free. ("We'll shout it from the rooftops," says Lamm, "They are *still* free!") It never occurred to the Wachowskis or Lamm to reprint them in book form. "The most satisfying thing," he says, "was that after two, three years of them being free we got the outcry to put them on paper. That was never the original plan and the fact we did it and people want it on their shelf was really gratifying."

Burlyman's following up the success of *Volume 1* with a second *Matrix* volume as well as two new bimonthly comic series: *Doc Frankenstein*, written by the Wachowskis with art by Steve Skroce, the key storyboard artist on the *Matrix* Trilogy, and *Shaolin Cowboy*, created, written and drawn by Geof Darrow, the Trilogy's conceptual artist.

Matrix Comics Volume II, apart from including newer online comics, will also include three all-new stories. "We have so much support," Lamm says, "from people doing the impossible in only a limited time. We only decided to do *Volume II* [this summer]. Just about every story we have from the web is being enhanced one way or another."

What many readers of the comics may not realize is that every *Matrix* comic counts towards the greater mythology. You'd think the Wachowski Brothers would be extremely protective of their "baby." Not at all, Lamm says. "Instead of making things difficult, they've made the approval process as smooth as possible. It's not a licensing scenario. It's their books, their stories. Not that everything has to pass before them at every stage, but they read everything. If there's something that may conflict, they're there to let me know. When we were in the heat of putting *Volume I* together, whether they were in Australia or in Los Angeles, they would specifically



Silent and mysterious, the Shaolin Cowboy comes to comics via the more-than-able hand and skill of Geof Darrow.

ask what talent I had just gotten or who I had sent something to or who's confirmed—they would *want* to know. They're hands-on, fully plugged-in. I can't stress enough: they're into comics."

Remarkably, Lamm says virtually none of the creators behind the *Matrix* comics have yet taken an angle on the concept or come up with an idea about it that surprises the Wachowskis. "To me that's amazing," he says. "They've had so much time leading up to the first *Matrix* —during which they continually asked themselves 'How does this world work?' So, they've *really* put their concept of the Matrix through the ringer. They shock me more times than not. A few times I was thinking, 'This is going to be a challenge,' but they've thought about something so similar they already have the answer. I have now probably asked Larry and Andy so many questions about the Matrix, the mechanics and the tricks behind it, it's comical."

Doc Frankenstein presents the Wachowski Brothers' reinvention of the classic monster, recreated by Darrow and Skroce, this time as a modern-day global enforcer with money and political influence. Instead of the bumbling, empty-headed monster modern audiences grew up seeing in movies, the Wachowskis portray him as an intellectual, as he was in the original Mary Shelley novel. "Everything you know about me," says Doc, "is about to change." He shares his existential musings on his origins, on the human condition and on the power of fear. At one point the monster says, "This country is conservative because this country is afraid."

"They're incapable of writing anything without a worldview," Lamm notes of the Brothers. But on whether this worldview could be considered politically charged, especially in a polarized America, Lamm says no. "I might say politically aware."

Skroce's work on *Doc* is dark and meaningful. He's not holding back and, ably colored by Jason Keith, the fear and view that the Monster evokes spills from the pages.

The Wachowskis also contribute "ass-ologue" to Darrow's *Shaolin Cowboy*, a kind of recap spoken by a donkey, the companion to the book's title character. Darrow renders the story of a futuristic Wild West with the same dense, hyperdetailed-style he is best for and that he brought to his distinctive *Matrix* designs.

Becoming full-fledged comic book publishers was never the intention. "The thing that made it a path we could take was the *Matrix Comics Volume 1*. It was our proving ground. We had the material. We had the stories, but did we really want to get involved in publishing, on the business side? I *still* don't know the answer to that," Lamm admits. "At that point, before we did anything, it was a huge amount of question marks. Based on being able to pull that off and have it be well received, it was logical to take the next step and challenge ourselves with something we've never done: come out with these two books on a bimonthly schedule."

Yet even with *The Matrix* entwining itself so thoroughly in the fabric of American pop culture, Lamm refuses to be overconfident about Burlyman's prospects. "I learned to remain wary just by watching so many creators and so many projects get off the ground and so many companies and so many books tank whether they deserve to or not. You can't presume anything about the public or people in general. All you can do is put the best product out, the best storytelling, the best art and then see how it goes." Laughing, he adds, "We're fragile right now."

As *The Matrix* pushed the limits of special effects in movies, might Burlyman eventually spearhead the next evolution of comics? Lamm has pushed the limits of the Internet with his hyper-interactive, organic designs for the *Matrix* site and many others produced by his company Redpill. "I'm super interested," he says. But Lamm has yet to see work that reinvents the medium in a way that takes full advantage of the Web's potential. "Websites, what they allow for is an organic flexibility in accepting information. That works exceedingly well for things that don't need linear navigation. That's where it breaks down for me when it comes to storytelling."

The drawbacks at first may not seem obvious, but Lamm sees them clearly. "I can't think of Kurt Vonnegut doing something of that nature and me going 'That was one of my favorite Kurt Vonnegut books.' It's taking that next step and giving some authorship to the reader —I think that's awesome, but at the end of the day there's a reason certain writers rise to the top of their game. It's because they are uniquely able to say something in an authoritative voice in a linear fashion and take you for a ride. That's an important aspect: the ability to give authoritative voice and authorship to an individual overrides how cool all the experimentation and forms of storytelling are at the moment. But I do love non-linear ways to access information. I'm always thinking, 'How can we make this collection of information feel like it has no beginning and no end, while making it feel like any point a person jumps in is their personal starting point?' That's mind-bending at times."

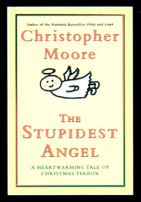
Regardless of Burlyman's eventual impact on the industry, Spencer Lamm is clearly enjoying working alongside four other men who over the years have come to share a special bond. "There's immense satisfaction in doing something with people you respect and like so much."

THEY'VE REALLY PUT THEIR CONCEPT OF THE MATRIX THROUGH THE RINGER.

JUST A Little Bit Moore

VAMPIRES, LIZARDS, DEMONS AND ANGELS: JUST A CROSS-SECTION OF CHARACTERS IN A CHRISTOPHER MOORE NOVEL.

By Tom LaSusa



Have you heard the one about the pot smoking lawman and the sex-crazed sea serpent? No? What about the vampire and her turkey-bowling boyfriend? Doesn't ring a bell? Well, how about a kung fu-wielding Messiah and his whore-loving best friend?

No, these aren't off-color jokes, but you'll laugh your ass off regardless. These are just a few of the strange and unusual characters you'll encounter in the pages of a Christopher Moore novel.

His books are not your typical read. Mark Twain's gift for tall tales is an obvious inspiration. You'll find the quirky, comical spirit of Douglas Adams happily residing between the passages. And like the literary giant John Steinbeck, a Christopher Moore novel has the ability to simultaneously entertain and educate — or at the very least, get you thinking beyond the chuckles.

In 2002, the author released *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff*, a fictional look at the "missing years" of Jesus as told by his historically forgotten best friend, Biff. The story finds the young Messiah-to-be (and his bud) traveling through India, the Orient and other lands, as he comes to terms with his destiny and how best to face it. Along the way, there's magic, sex (for Biff, at least), martial arts, wacky resurrections and angels who love pro wrestling and Spider-Man.

Moore's newest book, lovingly titled, *The Stupidest Angel: A Heartwarming Tale of Christmas Terror*, centers on a small boy who makes a yuletide wish. His prayer is, in fact, answered… unfortunately, by one of the Lord's less intelligent heralds. "This angel isn't exactly the brightest halo in the host," Moore shares. Fans of *Lamb* will be excited to recognize a familiar face floating through the pages of this new volume. "Yes, the title character is Raziel [the angel from *Lamb*]," the author reveals. "He completely screws up the assignment, thus putting the little village of Pine Cove into a Yule-tide battle with undead evil."

Ah yes, Pine Cove. Well familiar to the writer's fans, this fictional west coast town is the focal point of many stories — a haven for the strange and unusual. "I tend to write about Pine Cove when I am either out of money or out of time," he concedes. Pine Cove is based on Cambria, CA, where the author lived for 20 years. "My first book was set there because I couldn't afford to go anywhere to research. Whenever I was up against deadline, I would write about the little town." Moore believes small towns offer a special dynamic all of their own, "In a small town, every ripple will affect everyone else."

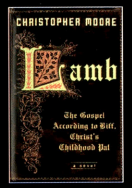
Before stepping into Cambria, the author started out in Ohio, growing up in small industrial towns. Though interested in writing fairly early, it wasn't the first career path he had in mind. "As I kid, I wanted to be a sailor, then a spy, then an actor, then at about 15 I started thinking about writing. Later, I shifted my ambition to being a photographer because I didn't think I could make a living as a writer. I got side-tracked by survival until I was about 25, when I started seriously pursing a career as a writer."

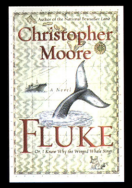
CHARLEE RODGERS

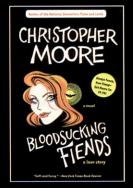
But a funny thing happened on the way to that career. Rather than writing a serious novel, Moore's first book, 1993's *Practical Demonkeeping*, was a hysterical tale involving a "well-preserved" 100-year-old ex-seminarian and a demon named Catch. The two end up in — where else — Pine Cove, where Catch decides the townsfolk make a lovely buffet.

"A year after, Disney bought the rights for, as they say, a major six figure advance," he reminisces. Before he knew it, *Demonkeeping* was being picked up around the world, and he was being pressed for another book. "I figured it took me 32 years to do the first one, I should have the second one done sometime around 2023. But all of a sudden I had readers, and my readers didn't want to wait."

After *Demonkeeping* came *Coyote Blue*, about a Native American boy turned successful insurance salesman and a trickster god named Coyote who turns the man's life upside down. Then came the extremely popular *Bloodsucking Fiends — A Love Story*. An homage to the vampire legend, *Fiends* spun the tale of a newbie vampire named Jody and her wannabe-writer boyfriend Tommy, who helps the new vampire come to terms with her powers, in between frames of "Turkey Bowling" (an actual sport involving a frozen fowl in favor of the traditional ball). Two other equally hysterical books followed: *Island of the Sequined Love Nun* and *The Lust Lizard of Melancholy Cove*. Then, Moore decided it was time to explore religion.







"I play in the realm of mythology," Moore explains, "and let's face it, mythology is just a religion that you don't believe in. I like thinking about faith, the basis of religions and the stories that come from mythology." *Lamb* certainly told a different tale of Jesus, but the writer explains he had no agenda other than entertainment. "There's no real message beyond trying to recognize that as human beings, what unites us is our human frailty, from which faith often springs. Faith is the result of the human consciousness trying to impose order on chaos."

Still, expecting some sort of religious backlash, Moore was a bit surprised when he didn't have to go into hiding. "People, especially people of faith, have been overwhelmingly positive about *Lamb*," he chimes. "I've been pleasantly surprised that people *got it*, and that gave me a little faith in the intelligence of my fellow Americans at a time when I thought that they'd abandoned intelligence for Jingoism and knee-jerk Patriotically Correct responses to everything. There are a lot of bright, tolerant, funny people in this country, and I had started to think that wasn't the case."

As for *The Stupidest Angel*, does the book's title suggest yet another round of theological hoopla? "It's darkly cheerful, or cheerfully dark," Moore contemplates, "something like that. But I don't think it will garner any negative reaction from religious types. It does have a cute little cartoon angel on the cover, and a few people might buy it for a kid or their grandma, then be surprised when they get to the people boning in the graveyard, and the cannibalism."

One thing readily apparent in Moore's writing is his dedication to extensive research. For *Lamb*, the author traveled to the Middle East. 2003's *Fluke: Or, I Know Why the Winged Whale Sings* showed both the author's knowledge and concern for the rapid decline of the ocean's gentle giants. Given his ability to write both humorously and with a fantasy bent, one might find his insistence for accuracy a little odd. "I really want people to be able to identify with the characters, even if they have extraordinary lives," he explains. "I ask the reader to suspend a lot of disbelief, and the best way to do that is to give them reality in which to stay grounded. I also like the idea of my readers learning something, painlessly, joyfully. I'm not out there to lecture, but I think readers come away from my books knowing a little more than when they went in, I know I do. And I have to know a subject pretty well in order to write funny stuff about it."

With *The Stupidest Angel* out and about, the writer is plotting and planning a new tale: a sequel to his vampire novel. "*Bloodsucking Fiends* was always meant to have a sequel," he shares. "The problem was that my publisher at the time sort of dropped the ball on the release of *Fiends*, and they put a hideously ugly cover on it, so the hardcover didn't do that well. Now, after 10 years, the paperback has stayed in print and has done consistently well, so my current publisher has agreed to release a sequel." Book two, *You Suck: A Love Story*, picks up where readers left vampire Jody and her guy Tommy… literally. "It opens up the day after the last book ends. I'll start it sometime next year. I really enjoyed writing the characters, who were both smartasses. I'm really looking forward to hanging out with them again, as well as hanging out in San Francisco, which is my favorite city and a great setting for Gothic stories."

Readers might "be surprised when they get to the cannibalism."

Another topic Moore is extremely interested in writing about is death. "I think it's time to write about it. In the last couple of years, I got a very close look at death and dying and the experiences gave me some perspective I didn't have before. We tend to ignore death as a part of life, when obviously it's something we all will go through. It's time to explore the archetypes of this under-examined human experience, and make fun of it."

What about a departure from humor? Does "funnyman" Christopher Moore think he could ever write a "straight" book? "I've considered it, but I don't think I'm capable of it. I mean, I could probably write an unfunny book, but not on purpose."

the 2004 Holiday Gift Guide!

Give & Get

No-holds-barred, sealed with Vampirella's kiss of approval

'Tis the holiday season again. Don't go into it blind, use this handy-dandy, hot little guide to find just the right, twisted things for your pals and beloved. Oh, yes, there's something for everyone here. • Shopping tips: all prices are manufacturer suggested retail price; the majority of this material can be found at fine comics specialty stores around the globe. Can't find a comic shop? Call 1-888-COMIC-BOOK or check out www.the-master-list.com for the one closest to you. Still having trouble pinpointing a location? Check out company websites for their listed shop of choice. And visit vampirella.com for a chance to win some of the items listed here!

Happy Buying!

Bites and Kisses, Vampi and the crew

Lipstick Rock

It's Motley Crüe's huge comeback! With pentagrams, the full drum kit, screaming guitar and bass and the bad boys in full glam galore just like you love them, the "Shout at the Devil" playset is a sure thing. ($60, mcfarlane.com)

6Pwack Quack!

See! Didn't you ever listen to all those treehuggers who told you to cut your soda rings before you threw 'em out. Well, now's your chance to say you're sorry with the most environmentally conscious rubber duckies ever. ($12.99, begoths.com)

Leg Man

Sam Kieth has vast amounts of talent and you can have some of it. Well, you can have Legs sitting on your shelf. Ooh, neat! ($150, Limited run, rockamerica.com)

You Know, For Kids!

Looking for that perfect stuffed toy to help conquer the fear of the dark? Can't go wrong with these! What's not comforting about Kindergoths' crooked smiles and spiked collars, mismatched eyes and tentacles for hair? ($24.00, begoths.com)

We Just Love The Goon

Not only can you get the trade paperbacks or the single issues, but now The Goon (and friends and enemies) can sit on your desk! Demand your Goon products! Oh, you know you want these! ($14.99, darkhorse.com)

FUZZY AND LEGS. PHOTOS BY JEN KNEE

Fuzzy Fun

Cute and sweet and oh so twisted, these furry friends are ready to help spread holiday cheer! Bunnywiths... will have people hopping for more and more and more! Soft, cuddly demons, Beezle and Bub are quite the pair! And, you know, red is a holiday color... (Bunnywiths $15.99 each, B&B $23.99 each, rockamerica.com)

Smoosh

Tim Burton created a slew of characters just like Toxic Boy. Don't let the whole "toxic" part bother you, this little guy is all kinds of smooshy for your main squeeze. ($9.99, darkhorse.com)

Postings

Wanna stuff that stocking? Look no further than Steve Jackson's Monster Masterpieces postcards, capturing some of the greatest moments in horror movie history from *The Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman* to *I was a Teenage Werewolf*. No *Scary Movie 3* or *Jason X*, just the classics, baby. ($14.95, monstermasterpieces.cjb.net)

Pretty Good!

Perfect for that Goth-on-the-go, this creepy SkullSet compact will keep your look graveyard fresh. Add a touch of "DOA" eye shadow, a dab of "Lust" lipstick and keep your holiday parties rocking all night long. ($12.99, begoths.com)

Eatin' in Sexy Style

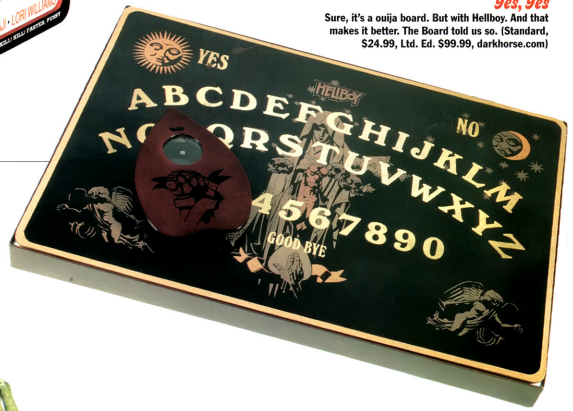
Russ Meyer could make cheap and sexy films that were so liked he got to keep making them! The most famous of these is *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* Now, imagine yourself in second grade with that lunchbox. Oh, yeah. Your nephew needs this. ($14.99, darkhorse.com)

Fred's Dead

Soap? Check. Shampoo? Check. Starved, sun-baked and chewed-up shipwreck survivor lost at sea and now lost in your tub? Check! *Now* you're ready for one relaxing bath. ($12.99, begoths.com)

Yes, Yes

Sure, it's a ouija board. But with Hellboy. And that makes it better. The Board told us so. (Standard, $24.99, Ltd. Ed. $99.99, darkhorse.com)



When Puppets Attack!

From the satirical safety film *When Zombies Attack!* comes these puppets, your best means of preparing for the next time zombies take over the world! ($12.99, grimmgrottogoods.com)

Nothing Says Festive Like Grant Morrison!

Twisted and thought-provoking, writer Grant Morrison's work runs the pseudo-traditional gamut of comics work: superheroes, bad girls, magic, mysticism and mayhem. He just does them better.
Grab a couple of his new and old classics from DC Comics and you'll soon know who your real friends are: *The Filth* collection ($19.95) • *Arkham Asylum* 10th Anniversary Edition ($29.95) • *Doom Patrol* trades ($19.95)

Legendary

If you know a horror fan who doesn't have a copy of *I Am Legend*, first smack them in the head and then hand them the illustrated version. One of *the* classic vampire tales of the modern age. ($35.00, idwpublishing.com)

On Target

Holidays get you down? Time to escape into the world of *Human Target*, the ridiculously acclaimed comic by Peter Milligan and Javier Pulido. Professional decoy Christopher Chance is starting to lose his grip on his identity—then again not having one's just part of his job. ($9.95, dccomics.com)

Heading

Ever the hero, Big Head fights all the evil he can! Evil like angst and depression and The Temptationress and Small Head… ooh, that Jeffrey Brown is crazy talented! ($12.95, topshelfcomix.com)

Hollow's Eve

Hallow Grounds imagines what happens when a world inhabited solely by women suddenly finds itself visited by men. Very European flavor (well, it's a European book) and, for some, a very scary concept. ($19.95, dccomics.com)

Damn, Dirty Ape

It's the king of all monsters! Don't go all Godzilla on me. You know damn well that *Kong* rules all. And you gotta see the interiors! Joe Devito's an *amazing* painter. ($24.99, darkhorse.com)

Y, Says I

Associate Publisher Yoshi Aino doesn't like much, but he likes *Y: The Last Man*. It's the one comic book he looks for these days, and he *hasn't* been waiting patiently for this new collection. Would someone please make sure he gets this? ($12.95, dccomics.com)

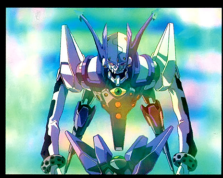
Rolly Poley

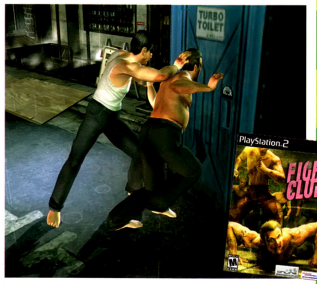
With its pink cover, *Tales from Fish Camp* is deceiving 'cause Danielle Henderson is no girly-girl. Heading out in search of money and adventure, *Fish Camp* quirkily toils along by way of fish guts, booze, friends and mysterious fun. You know people who need adventure in their lives, so give them someone else's. ($9.95, ait-planetlar.com)

EYE-POPPING

Scyred: The Lost Ground

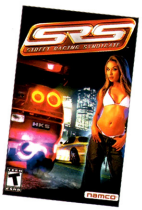
The hit anime series is now available in a limited edition boxed set ready to consume every hour of the holidays you were supposed to spend with your friends and family. (Standard $29.98, Ltd. Ed. $49.98, scryedanime.com)





Second Rule

We're not saying much of anything about the *Fight Club* game because that would break the rules, and we don't like to break the rules. Not when we can break bones! Now, that's the holiday spirit! ($49.99, vugames.com)



Spooky

This is the time of year when *A Christmas Carol* springs to mind, and then you start to think about what would have happened if Scrooge had played *Ghosthunter*. ($49.99, namco.com)

Good, Clean Fun

Girls, guns and fast cars: like a stocking filled with candy. Play *Street Racing Syndicate* on Playstation. It's better than Christmas turkey. ($49.99, namco.com)

Box of Beauties

Puh-leese! You know your pals want this. Why not just give in! *Elvira's Box of Horrors* is great fun for all with classic movies and classic Elvira all mashed together like many of the great monster movies of old. ($29.95, timelife.com)

First Blood, Baby

What? You think this is all horror, all the time? Nah. Not when there's John Rambo to get out to the masses. Everyone knows someone who would love, love, love this. Don't deny them their pleasures. ($44.98, lgf.com)

Vamped?

The father of all zombie movies made a pretty cool vampire flick in 1977. *Martin* may be a vampire, or he may not. He drinks blood but has no fangs. The curiosity is killing you, isn't it? ($14.98, lionsgatehorror.com)

You already have these:

We'd also like to suggest things like the new *Dawn of the Dead* DVD or *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, but we figure you already have those, making it difficult for the rest of us to buy something for you this holiday. So, thanks *so* very much. You don't think there's enough pressure during this season that I need to spend extra time finding you something that you don't already have? Jeez. Way to be selfish, you nasty little elf.

NEW BLOOD

WHATEVER GETS YOU THROUGH THE NIGHT

Let them bleed! Open the door to NEW BLOOD where we you can find your type, sit back and enjoy the best, the brightest and even the questionable in comics, books, movies, toys and chicks. They say there's something for everyone; here's the place to find it.

Vault 36
Boneyard, Dead End & More!

Flesh & Blood 41
Haunted *House*

Vampi Tale 42
Sword of Dracula: "Witness"

Suckers 47
Monkey Brains & Buddha

Luna Chicks 49
Monster Man's Ms. Brooks

Simon Fraser's *House*
Page 41

Killer Kung Fu Brains
Page 47

Hip-Hop *Samurai*
Page 39

Ooh, Meet Aimee
Page 49

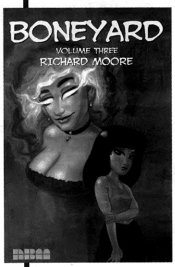
COMICS

CEMETERY TRAILS

Sinister and silly among the tombstones

BONEYARD Writer/Artist Richard Moore

NBM Publishing (nbmpublishing.com)



The sweet story of a boy and his graveyard, *Boneyard* is easily accessible no matter when you enter the story. Though the art is cartoony—big heads, big eyes—the characters are individuals, and what individuals: a giant wolf, a walking skeleton, stone gargoyles, a female lagoon creature and a 2000-year-old vampiress who carries a torch for the comparably young cemetery owner.

Volume 3 is particularly fun for the swimsuit calendar photo-shoot to raise money to save Michael Paris from selling the graveyard. Sexy silliness and not-so-subliminal suggestions pepper the book, and even play into the main story of an evil temptress trying to persuade Paris to sell to her. And she's in it for the hard sell. —*MM*

AMERICAN ELF: The Collected Sketchbook Diaries of James Kochalka

Writer/Artist: James Kochalka

Top Shelf (topshelfcomix.com)

In his cartoon for February 4, 2000, James Kochalka writes, "Life is dumb and repetitive and I like it." The five years of cartoons collected in *American Elf* showcase a normal life, the ups and downs, love, friendship, excitement and everything in between.

"I just want my life to matter a little." Who hasn't wanted what Kochalka wanted on December 6, 2000?

"Several times a day I reach a point where the burden of being alive is just too great. I want to achieve something lasting and great," he says on April 10, 2001. But then he asks about his cat, "I wonder if Spandy ever feels this way?" Real snippets of a real life.

While daunting in size and weight, *Sketchbook Diaries* is an easy and uplifting read. There's no need to get through it in one sitting, there's no need (well, until the baby comes, maybe) to read it in order. Just take it one month at a time, experience Kochalka's days, reflect on your own. Life is what you make it, or even how you draw it. —*MM*

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Writer: Damon Hurd
Arist: Christopher Steininger

Alternative Comics (indyworld.com/altcomics)

Reading Damon Hurd's comics is like watching a surgery. He cuts, though not through flesh and bone, but through minds and souls. With his latest work, *White Elephant*, Hurd cuts even deeper than his previously lauded works *A Sort of Homecoming* and his award winning *My Uncle Jeff*. He tells the story of Gene, a comics writer plagued by dreams of the family he no longer talks to. He desperately wants to reconnect with them but can't get past the events that ripped his family apart in the first place.

The comic's unusual format, told as an illustrated stage play, keeps us at a distance from Gene, in the same way Gene keeps himself at a distance from the solution to his anguish. At the same time, the stage allows Gene to move freely back and forth between his therapist's couch and his memories, the past and present literally sharing the same space, dramatizing Gene's state of mind.

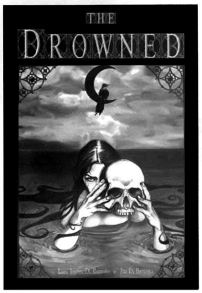
Hurd took a risk with the format choice and it pays off handsomely. What could have already been a courageous and deeply human work, becomes something even more startling and powerful.—*BA*

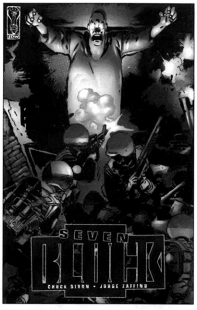
THE DROWNED

Writer: Laini Taylor-Di Bartolo
Artist: Jim Di Bartolo

Image Comics (thedrowned.net)

A lunatic's escape from an asylum, a quest for revenge, hidden family secrets, brutal fights, lots of murder and the never-ending battle between the forces of light and dark... what more does a great comic book need? Husband and wife team Laini and Jim Di Bartolo's tale of the frenzied events surrounding a man's pursuit of the truth behind his sister's death and the consequences of his success makes for a stunning debut. Though somewhat slow to start, the story is riveting, while Jim's art gives the books a dripping, ethereal quality so you feel that at any minute the dead will lay a cold hand on your shoulder. Their employment of crows as a bridge between the living and the dead is far from a new one in comics, but it is not central to the story and thus kept from becoming heavy-handed. With the story's end, Laini successfully navigates the narrow path of piquing reader curiosity. Readers are left thinking not "I have to pick up the next book," but rather, "There are countless ways they can go with this, I have to see what they do next." —*Tim Paulison*





SEVEN BLOCK

Writer: Chuck Dixon
Atist: Jorge Zaffino
IDW Publishing (idwpublishing.com)

It's difficult to put into words any feeling you get from a comic. Mind you, many comics today do illicit emotional responses, but those books tend to be personal and introspective self-published volumes. *Seven Block*, written by one of the modern masters of action/adventure comics, Chuck Dixon, is a nasty piece of work, and that's in a good way. Taking two prisoners and subjecting them to off-camera experiments, Dixon creates a claustrophobic entity: people and events push against each other, becoming questions and answers that you just don't want to know, until the inevitable explodes all around you.

Jorge Zaffino's dark, telling art is the perfect vehicle for Dixon's story. There is anger and angst in every ink stroke. Horror masquerades openly as science and justice in *Seven Bl*ock, and, as with most stories such as this, force you to consider whether the punishment fits the crime. —*MM*

ALEISTER ARCANE

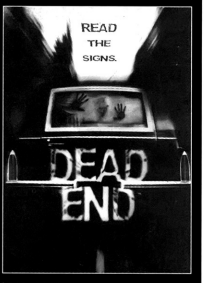
Writer: Steve Niles
Artist: Breehn Burns
IDW (idwpublishing.com)

Steve Niles' horrific tale of television creature feature host Aleister Arcane's blood curdling revenge on the townspeople who destroyed his career, fearing his innocuous midnight matinee antics would be a corrupting influence, can make your head spin. That's because Niles twists the story in ways that involve self-fulfilling prophesies, the media's influence on society and the oft-times unrealized consequences of our crusade against that influence. The multiple levels worked into this story make it accessible to a wide range of readers, from those just looking for an eerie spine-chiller to those who will see it as a poignant editorial on our society's tendencies for misdirected blame. Add to that artwork that makes the reader feel like they're still watching one of those old horror movies, half under the covers and praying their parents won't find them up past bed-time, and the package is complete.—*TP*

MOVIES

TWISTS & TURNS

Shortcuts aren't always good ideas



DEAD END

Director/Writer: Jean-Baptiste Andrea & Fabrice Canepa
Lions Gate Home Entertainment (lionsgatehorror.com)

Her boyfriend hacked to death, her mother's brain oozing out of her shattered skull and her brother incinerated, Marion Harrington (Alexandra Holden) laments to her father, "All we wanted was a nice Christmas."

The Harringtons, the seemingly typical American family, are making their way to a Christmas Eve get-together. The father, played by veteran actor Ray Wise, gets "adventurous" and takes a shortcut off the interstate. Hours pass, miles pile up and they see nothing, not people, not cars and only a single sign pointing to a town that exists on no map.

Finally they pick-up a dazed woman dressed all in white (Amber Smith) carrying only her baby. Is she a victim or an agent of something more sinister?

The minimalist environment of the movie, which takes place almost entirely within or close by the family car, serves as a sort of pressure cooker. As casualties mount, the bonds holding the family together shatter under the strain. While there's enough blood and murder to go around, the scarcity of actual on-screen gore puts a lot of weight on the actors to sell the interfamily struggle as the true horror of the movie.

Dead End does too good a job trapping us in the car with the Harringtons. We soon become just as eager to get off the road. The effect is both unsettling and at times claustrophobic. The "twist ending" though reframes the entire experience in a way that makes it tragic and meaningful, though whether getting to this destination was worth the trip is another matter entirely.—*BA*

THE WICKED WEST

Writers: Robert Tinnell & Todd Livingston
Artist: Neil Vokes
Image Comics (theblackforest.net)

Perhaps no place in America has been as romanticized as the West. It's there that stories have been set of the proud-and-noble fighting corruption and savagery, examples of boldness in the face of the unknown. The reality of course was not so glorious. *The Wicked West*'s writers, Todd Livingston and Robert Tinnell tackle that unique dichotomy in a disarmingly simple fashion: a man takes his eager grandson to see a western and floats back and forth between what he sees on-screen and his own memories of how events really happened.

In the movie, the West is perfectly lit. A dashing sheriff and the damsel-in-distress wear broad smiles and clothes without one stain or wrinkle. Things seem simple, heroes act heroic and the vampires that plague the town are easily vanquished. Grandfather's recollections are darkly lit, with hard shadows and a muddy color palette. The hero here is a teacher of gloomy demeanor, though according to one of his pupils he "looks like a gunfighter." Few trust him even as he becomes the only one capable of ending the undead menace.

Neil Vokes masterful art teamed with Scott Keating's coloring reinforces the divide between the two Wests, easily shifting between the cleaner style used in the movie sequences and an inkier, messier style employed for the gruesome reality those scenes gloss over. In the end, the reader can't help but ask himself which is worse: honoring a history that never was or burying one we can't stand to face.—*BA*

DAISY KUTTER: THE LAST TRAIN

Writer/Artist: Kazu Kibuishi
Viper Comics (vipercomics.com)

Everyone wants to know: will Daisy Kutter, bad-ass gunslinger, ever get back into The Game: robbing trains, shooting down planes and causing a general ruckus? "If by 'Game'," she says, "you mean dry goods sales, then *yeah*."

Nope. If you believe her, Kutter has hung up her "damned pistol" for good and retired to a simpler life running a general store in a sleepy Western town. Then, one night, she tests her luck at poker and everything changes. Maybe the pistol must come out one final time, maybe she has to hit one last train.

Comics newcomer Kazu Kibuishi's art is clean and accessible, especially for younger audiences. The random robots, whose presence hints this isn't the Wild West we know, are simply drawn instead of the way most artists draw robots now. This masterfully told tale, instead of exhausting the usual western clichés, turns out to be a disarmingly fun time. —*BA*

AGE OF BRONZE

Writer/Artist: Eric Shanower
Image Comics (age-of-bronze.com)

The spectacle of a mega-budget movie that can be so easily overshadowed by a comic book is something no one expects. But *Age of Bronze* tells the story of the Fall of Troy better and more extensively than any film could.

Meticulously researched and illustrated, *Age of Bronze* is a work of exquisite beauty, and a labor of love for Eric Shanower who has now been slaving over his Greek history for four years. With two trades out, it's very easy to get drawn into the oft-told tale. Don't expect Hollywood gloss or a boring history lesson, just sit back, read, learn and enjoy.—*MM*

Enslaved By Her Charms
A Vampire Novel
by Daniel Valenti

An exciting and seductive novel about a female vampire and her helpless male and female victims

To order, go to:
www.enslavedbyhercharms.com • www.amazon.com
Or send check or money order for $12.95, payable to:
Daniel Valenti
P.O. Box 319
East Schodack, NY 12063

JUST RELEASED!

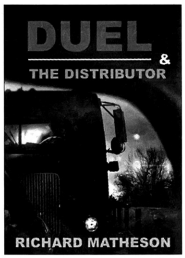
BOOKS

MORE MATHESON

The Horror Master's New Tomes

DUEL & THE DISTRIBUTOR

Writer: Richard Matheson
Gauntlet Press (gauntletpress.com)



HELL HOUSE

Writer: Ian Edginton
Artist: Simon Fraser
IDW Publishing (idwpublishing.com)

Gauntlet Publications is issuing a new volume in their continuing program of classic scripts by classic writers, and Richard Matheson's *Duel & The Distributor* showcases such talent, and introduces new readers to where the good short story writers went to in the 1960s: *Playboy*.

The Duel has a few claims to fame, as when it was adapted to the small screen and was almost completely loyal to Matheson's story and screenplay. *Duel* also introduced the world to a young director named Steven Spielberg.

But the key to this book is the short stories themselves. "The Duel," a man versus machine battle, is as intense as any car race. You can feel the momentum in the words. "The Distributor" is scary because it shows that regular, old mankind can be evil in such subtle and easy ways. It is disturbing in every sense of the word.

The book also contains extras like an interview with Dennis Weaver, star of the *Duel* TV movie, the original *Duel* script, a spec script by Matheson for *Distributor* with all his notes and deletions, and afterwards by Matheson himself. Whether a writer or just a fan, this book is key to any collection.

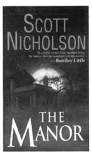
The Matheson invasion continues with IDW Publishing's contribution of an adaptation of Matheson's *Hell House*, following their reissuing of Matheson's *I Am Legend*.

Adapted by Ian Edginton and illustrated by Simon Fraser (see page 41), *Hell House* is raw, contributing to the fear factor, but it's not as scary as if you had to create it in your own head. The black and white art is reminiscent of the *Legend* volume, allowing the story to take center stage, setting the scene of mystery, wonder and fear.

Though not as visually shocking as *Legend*, *Hell House* has its own appeal. Innocent scenes and common people slowly become something more, and with the story building as a miniseries, one can imagine the art progressing with the evils of the story. While it might be tempting to wait for the inevitable trade, to be teased by the cliffhanger sense of the single issues adds to the horror of the *House*. —*MM*

THE MANOR

Author: Scott Nicholson
Pinnacle Horror (Kensingtonbooks.com)

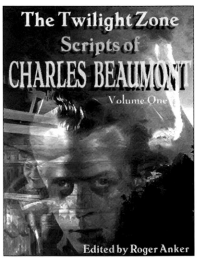


The key to a good horror novel is the ability to bring the reader back in their mind to the fears and uncertainties of childhood, where anything was possible and you never knew what you'd find around the corner. Scott Nicholson knows how to do just that, and that's why his latest, *The Manor*, is so magical. The plot is a simple, familiar tale of an old house plagued by ghosts and a mysterious history, and of course is set very near Halloween. But what makes it transcend cliché is the quality of the writing. It is gorgeously poetic, and evocative and chilling in a way that many, more famous authors have long forgotten about.

Parapsychologist (i.e. ghost chaser) Anna Galloway is at the center of the story, trying to unravel the mystery of Ephram Korban's manor while struggling with her own mortality. We learn early on that Anna is dying, and this lends the proceedings a unique desperation and urgency. Others may have left the revelation of Anna's disease to form a twist ending, but Nicholson chooses to let us know immediately, adding a poignancy to her character that would otherwise have been missing. Along the way Anna meets a host of archetypal characters: the child ghost pleading to find peace; Miss Mamie, the mysterious matriarch; Cris, the beautiful vixen; and Ransom, the grizzled farmhand. They are saved from being stereotypes by the strength of Nicholson's abilities as a storyteller and character shaper.

Even Korban Manor itself, in the tradition of many great horror stories, is a character in its own right, with a secret to be found in every dark corner.

The Manor is essential reading for true connoisseurs of Gothic horror, and Nicholson is a gifted writer to watch.—*Jim Catapano*



THE TWILIGHT ZONE SCRIPTS OF CHARLES BEAUMONT, VOLUME ONE

Gauntlet Press (gauntletpress.com)

Edited by Roger Anker, *The Twilight Zone Scripts of Charles Beaumont* collects nine of the 22 teleplays the prolific writer scripted for the show, including one that was not produced. Together they prove that he was almost as responsible for the series' legendary status as Rod Serling. The episodes included are: "Perchance To Dream," "A Nice Place To Visit," "The Howling Man," "The Prime Mover," "The Jungle," "Person Or Persons Unknown," "In His Own Image," "Passage Of The Lady Anne" and the unmade "Gentlemen, Be Seated." They are all presented in the original format, complete with typographical errors.

Beaumont's life story unfolds between the scripts, and it is as strange as any of the masterpieces he wrote. His tragic death from Alzheimer's at only 38 years old is made all the more ironic by the genius of his creative mind before it slipped into the fog.

This book is essential reading for *Twilight Zone* fans, and is also an opportunity for students of horror writing to learn from a true master of the genre.—*JC*

ANIME

FIGHT/DANCE

Classic in the making, *Samurai Champloo* breaks it down

SAMURAI CHAMPLOO

Director: Shinichiro Watanabe
Geneon Entertainment (samuraichamploo.com)

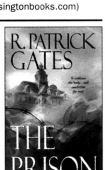
Jin is a quiet, polite samurai with a traditional sword fighting style. Mugen is a loud-mouthed and ill-mannered ronin with a break dance-influenced fighting style. They are the opposite sides of the same coin as they only live for the battle and to fight someone strong. When they first meet they immediately begin to fight and end up burning down the dumpling house where a young girl named Fuu works. Jin and Mugen end up indebted to Fuu, and she binds them together by making them vow not to kill each other until they find the "samurai who smells of sunflowers" for her.

Samurai Champloo is the latest project from *Cowboy Bebop* director, Shinichiro Watanabe. These are well-written stories intricately woven with quirky historical facts about Japan's Edo period (17^{th}-19^{th} century). The stunningly fluid fight sequences are set to a funky hip-hop influenced soundtrack. All these components combine to make *Samurai Champloo* one of the most innovative new anime series to come out in a long time. Freestyling hip-hop samurais! What else do you need to hear? *Champloo* is just badass.

Geneon Entertainment brings the first volume to the U.S. in January 2005.—*Daniel Kang*

THE PRISON

Author: R. Patrick Gates
Pinnacle Horror (kensingtonbooks.com)



With hints of *House on Haunted Hill*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and general horror clichés, *The Prison* rises above it all to be a strong tale, taking everything that's come before and making it more.

With each turned page, another element of the true nature of The Hill comes to pass, but no one believes it. A reader can piece it together, and can be horrified that no one in the book can see what's right before their eyes; why would anyone believe it, though? Really. Who believes in ghosts? Sadly, as their nightmares become reality, the officers in the prison soon come to believe just that.

Patrick Gates' writing is addictive—each scene, a vista unto grand horror, each character a unique piece to the puzzle; you want, no *need*, to know what happens to them and why.

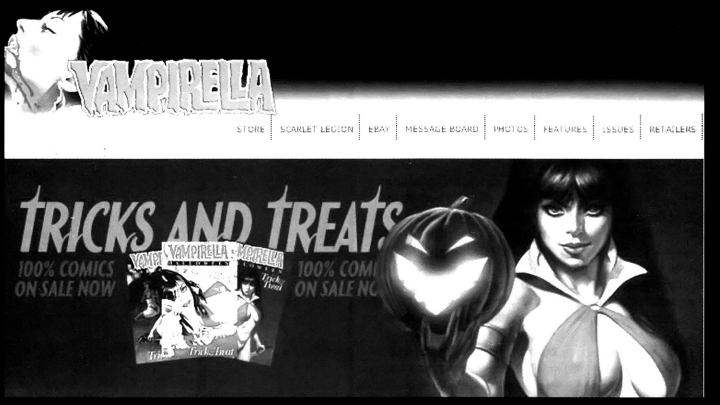
The Prison is a strong ghost story with great respect for yesterday's tales, but a solid haunted house for today.—*MM*

"This fantastic surreal comic reads like a dream induced by a night of western films, cases of Budweiser, and bittersweet ex sex."
-PUNK PLANET

Welcome to Plastic Farm

www.plasticfarm.com

GET TANGLED IN THIS WEB!



WWW.VAMPIRELLA.COM

DRAWING HELL

SIMON FRASER WELCOMES YOU TO *HELL HOUSE*. HE HOPES YOU SURVIVE YOUR STAY.

By Chris Lamb

Simon Fraser is best known as co-creator of *2000AD*'s *Nikolai Dante*, the story of a too-cool-to-kill mercenary stuck in the middle of the Russian Revolution bumped up to 2666 with several handfuls of cyborgs, aliens and bars-without-last-calls thrown in to keep things interesting. Here, he talks to VAMPIRELLA about his first work in horror and American comics, *Hell House*, due from IDW in December.

VAMPIRELLA: So why *Hell House* for your first American project? Why horror? Do you want to do something completely separate from the *2000AD* style, or are you moving into a genre you've always wanted to work in?

SIMON FRASER: When you've been working on one project for a long period of time you tend to get associated with that character and that style. *Hell House* is very intense and atmospheric, very different from *Dante's* action/comedy/sci-fi. So I end up using different skills and it broadens my palette of techniques.

V: Ian Edginton is writing the adaptation of Richard Matheson's novel. The last try at adapting *Hell House* was a mostly crap film written by Matheson himself. Does Ian know what the hell he's doing?

SF: That was the major concern I had when I agreed to do *Hell House*. They told me it would be a very faithful adaptation, right down to all the dialogue in the book being used. Now that could have been deadly dull, with lots of talking heads, but Ian has *really* done an adaptation here. The story is told visually, but at the same time it's also very much Matheson's book. Ian has really done a bang-up job on this.

I was worried that if I saw the film, it would overwhelm the impressions and ideas that I had from the book. When I got the DVD, it was a relief. The film is rather anemic and the cast is *so* way off that I was laughing.

A lot of what is interesting about the book is the characters; they are such an odd mismatched bunch. This isn't a teen-slasher story; they are all middle-aged, all with interesting histories, passions and hang-ups. The meat of the story is watching them trying to make sense of their situation, trying to cope with each other and also trying to survive the very personal way that the house attacks each one of them.

Believing the horrors that happen are key to Fraser's work on *Hell House*.

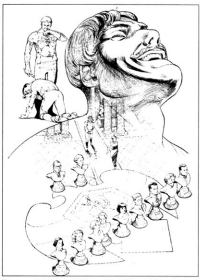
V: Your art on *Hell House* is very tight, more realistic, for lack of a better term, than a lot of your previous work. Is the style change just for the book, or a conscious step on your part?

SF: *Hell House* is a black & white book, so the linework has to carry the tone and texture of the story much more than with a color story like *Dante*. I'm not sure if my *Hell House* drawing style is more realistic, but there is a requirement, when doing a supernatural story like that, to keep it very grounded and intense. We have to believe in the characters and also the threat.

V: What's next? Your website mentions a few more projects with *2000AD* and a couple of creator-owned books waiting to get off the ground.

SF: I've got about four different projects that could be the next thing. Two for the French market, two for the US market, and I could still end up doing some stuff on *2000AD*. This is quite apart from my creator-owned thing, "Lilly Mackenzie and the Mines of Charybdis," which is my fallback position if I'm not happy with anything else. All of my potential next projects are sci-fi related in some way, so it's probably back to familiar turf after my detour into "Haunted House" comics.

Actually, Vampirella would be fun to do. Perhaps you could put a word in for me?



Fraser hit his stride with *Nikolai Dante* in *2000AD* from UK-based Rebellion.

HELL HOUSE © RICHARD MATHESON, IDW. N DANTE © REBELLION. ART BY SIMON FRASER

NEW YORK CITY
GRAND CENTRAL STATION
OKAY, WHERE IS HE?
TRAIN'S PULLIN' UP, RON.
DO YOU SEE THAT GUY SMOKING OVER THERE? DOESN'T HE KNOW THIS IS NEW YORK?
SAIC RONNIE VAN HELSING
AGENT MARCUS KWAN
AGENT BADI NASCIMENTO
"HERE WE GO. THERE'S ABE--
--WITH FREDDIE THE TOOTH, A VAMPIRE WHO'S ROLLING ON HIS MASTERS."
AGENT ABE SHARP
FREDDIE "THE TOOTH" FRIES, PROTECTED WITNESS.
"THERE ISN'T A WORD FOR HOW VALUABLE THIS GUY IS."
I DON'T SEE NOBODY.
HUSH.
YOU SAID THERE'D BE A TEAM.
...
DO I GOTTA HIT YA AGAIN, FREDDIE? LOOK, THERE'S THE BOSS.
GOOD EVENING, MR. FRIES.
I'M AGENT VAN HELSING OF THE POLIDORIUM.
YOU'RE DOING GOOD SO FAR, AND WITH ANY LUCK, YOUR TRIP TO THE SAFE HOUSE SHOULD BE AS UNEVENTFUL AS THE TRAIN FROM VEGAS.
YEAH, BECAUSE A NAME LIKE VAN HELSING IS JUST THE THING FOR AVOIDING VAMPIRES, RIGHT?

VAMPIRELLA AND SWORD OF DRACULA'S RONNIE VAN HELSING IN "WITNESS"

JASON HENDERSON
STORY

GREG SCOTT
ART

ED DUKESHIRE
LETTERS

I WAS TOLD I WASN'T GOING TO BE CONSTRAINED.
HE DONE ANYTHING BUT COMPLAIN?
YOU THE NURSE?
PLEASE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THIS WITNESS A BATH, ABRAHAM.
MARCUS--- WALK WITH ME, I THINK I SAW SOMETHING.
WE'RE ON THE WAY TO THE VAN. I NEED TRANSPORT TO BE WAITING IN BATTERY PARK--WE DON'T WANNA SPEND MUCH TIME ON THE TRASFER.
WHAT--WHAT THE HECK IS THIS COLLAR SUPPOSED TO DO?
HEEEERE WE GO.
HEY, LADY.
YOU GUYS OUT FOR A WALK?
THESE GUYS I KNOW AS VAMPIRES WITH THE BATHORY ORGANIZATION.
FREDDY WORKS FOR RUTHVEN, AND HAS THE GOODS ON AT LEAST THREE SMUGGLING OPERATIONS.
HEY, RONNIE--- ANY PROBLEMS OVER HERE?
PROBLEMS?
PROBLEMS?
AND WHAT RUTHVEN WANTS SECRET, BATHORY WANTS TO KNOW. CAPTURING FREDDY THE TOOTH WOULD MAKE THESE VAMPS.
NAH, NO PROBLEMS. JUST SOME PUNKS.

OKAY. HEH-- HERE'S WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN. YOU'RE GONNA LET US SIDLE ON UP BY OUR PAL FREDDY.
AND FREDDY AND WE ARE GONNA WALK. AND THERE'S NOT GONNA BE AN ARGUMENT. OR WE CAN DO IT LATER, AND THERE WILL BE A LOT OF ARGUMENT.
YEAH, 'CAUSE I'VE NEVER *HEARD* THAT BEFORE AND AT THIS POINT I USUALLY *DO* ACTUALLY HAND OVER THE WITNESS.
WE'RE BEING WATCHED. SOMEONE IN THE UPPER LEVEL. IS THAT...
*ELLA, *!@&!*
*IF SHE GETS CLOSE I GOTTA TELL HER I'M STILL TICKED ABOUT THE PARTY IN WYOMING. BUT THEN I GUESS I SHOULDN'T GIVE HER THE SATISFACTION. BUT SHE SHOULD KNOW THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT JUST DON'T COME OUT OF A **CARPET**.*
SO, GOSH, I GUESS IT'S GONNA BE THE HARD WAY, FELLAS. SEE YA 'ROUND.
WE'LL KEEP YOU COMPANY, FREDDY.
I AIN'T GETTING IN THAT THING. I WAS TOLD THERE'D BE NO *CONFINED SPACES*.
MR. TOOTH, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE VERY COMFORTABLE. NOW PLEASE WATCH YOUR HEAD. WHERE DID WE GET THIS GUY, ABE?
HE CAME OUT OF HIDING TO SEE HIS *SHRINK*.
OKAY. ABE, YOU DRIVE.
BUT I--
ABE.
I'LL DRIVE.

WE PULL OUT WITHOUT INCIDENT.
MMMMRRBLE "ABE ABE ABE" NEXT TIME WE'LL SEE YOU DRIVING IN @#&% MANHATTAN.
WEST SIDE HIGHWAY IS ACTUALLY NO BIG DEAL—SMOOTH SAILING ALL THE WAY TO BATTERY PARK CITY TO MEET OUR WATER TRANSPORT.
AND JUST WHEN IT'S ALL PERFECT, ABE SLOWS BEHIND A GARBAGE TRUCK.
AND THE GARBAGE TRUCK GIVES US A LIFT.
CLICLUKASH!
I KNOW WE'RE IN TROUBLE WHEN I HEAR THE GRATE OF METAL, THE FORKLIFT UNDER THE REINFORCED CHASSIS—WHEELS SPINNING.
VRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
TRY TO ACCOUNT FOR EVERYTHING AND ONE GARBAGE TRUCK CAN RUIN YOUR WHOLE DAY.
GUYS? GET DOWN!
POOF
BOOM
ARMOR-PIERCING ROUNDS. A CONCUSSION GRENADE GOES OFF INSIDE THE LAYERS OF THE DOOR. MY EARS GO NUTS AND WE GET THROWN LIKE DOLLS.

WE KICK THE DOORS OPEN AND THEY CLATTER OFF THEIR HINGES. I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF YELL--
I'LL TAKE THE LEFT! YOU TAKE THE RIGHT!
THESE ARE HUMANS--INDENTURED SLAVES OR MERCS, WHICHEVER. RUTHVEN WANTS FREDDY BAD, AFTER ALL.
COPS ARE ALREADY COMING. THE MERCS TURN IMMEDIATELY TO NEUTRALIZE THEM.
AS THE COP CAR EXPLODES I SEE A BIKE COME FROM NOWHERE, BURSTING THROUGH THE FLAMES--A SALAMANDER ON WHEELS.
I WATCH THE MERCS STOP, MOMENTARILY CONFUSED BY THIS NEW PLAYER.
AND THAT'S ALL THE DISTRACTION MARCUS NEEDS TO JUMP--TWO GUYS WITH GUNS IS NOTHING--JUST BONES.
KRAKK
AND I'M KICKING MYSELF BECAUSE THE BLAST IN THE DOOR STILL HAS ME SWAYING.
To Be Concluded...

SUCKERS

THE INS-AND-OUTS OF HORROR FLICKS

THE BRAINS HAVE IT

KAGAN MCLEOD TAKES ON A BRAIN FIGHTIN' BUDDHA

If you walked in on your bathing husband to find 15 human brains attached to his skin sucking his life away like leeches, how would you react? With shock is the obvious answer, but after that wears off and your husband is buried, you'd probably want to find out how 15 blood-sucking brains got into your bathtub. Not so much the case in cheaply made 80s horror movies, but that's part of the reason why they're awesome.

Black Magic With Buddha (1983, Lo's Film Co.), a Chinese movie shot in Thailand, is one of the few films directed by veteran kung fu movie villain Lo Lieh. Lieh starred in *5 Fingers of Death* and countless other movies for Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers Studios. Lieh was also famous for his role as the white-browed priest Pai Mei, the character Quentin Tarantino borrowed for the second installment of *Kill Bill*. One of the actors to fight against Pai Mei in one of Lieh's previous films also stars in *Black Magic*, the handsomely moustached Chen Kuan Tai.

In *Black Magic with Buddha*, Chen Kuan Tai plays Ben, an average Joe hoping to make it rich. In fact, he wants it so bad that he gets a flight to New Guinea where he heard there was a mummy with a brain that would grant wishes! With the help of a local witch doctor, he finds the mummy and cracks out the brain. He's warned that he must destroy this brain with holy water once his wish comes true.

Back home, Ben gets right down to business. He activates and "rejuices" the brain which starts to breathe, obscene-phone-call-style, and is ready to grant some wishes. Ben's first, predictably, is for a million bucks. Of course he's very secretive about his new gray matter mate and starts acting a little strange. His sister calls him on it and soon a quarrel escalates into a yelling match ending with Ben's defensive comeback: "See how you die!"

Evidently, brains aren't the smartest of organs because this one takes Ben's comment literally. However, with the money Ben inherits from her, he becomes a millionaire!

Aroused by his greed, Ben approaches the brain and wishes that ever-so-classic wish, for more wishes. Things go so well for Ben that for a few days he forgets to worship the pulsating brain. This makes the brain very mad and it breathes very hard. It's getting tricky for Ben to cover up the strange events that follow, but he does a really good job. When a dead dog appears on his porch with its brains mashed out, he tells his wife, "Forget about these things."

They battle the most hideous monster filmed on a $60 budget.

Satisfied with his success and perhaps a little worried about dead dogs and bathtub brains, Ben decides to destroy the sinister cerebellum. His last drop of holy water has been spilled and he has a terrible time in the garden burying the crawling parasitic brain. Realizing he needs help, Ben turns to sorcery while his wife turns to her new god, a four-faced Buddha. Ben finds a wild-haired magician from the jungle (played by Lo Lieh) and his wife brings home a gaudy golden statue of this new Buddha.

Both parties invite their "brain devil" exterminators to the house and personalities collide. With an unimpressive surprise appearance by Buddha himself, the magician and the four-faced Buddha work together effectively, as well as comedically. Four-face enters wild-hair's body and as one, they battle the most hideous monster filmed on a $60 budget: a tree-climbing humanoid made entirely of bulbous brain-gore!

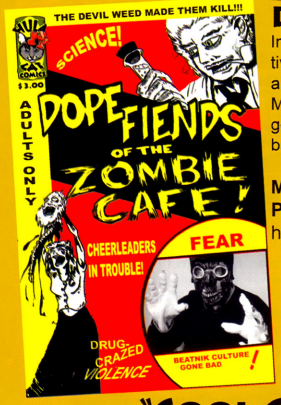
This is a rare, inventive example of Southeastern Asian horror from a time before sequels and remakes. With elements common in many horror films but enough new ideas to keep it unique, *Black Magic With Buddha* (even with the clumsy special FX) still makes for great viewing 20 years later. Some might even call it cerebral! —*Kagan McLeod*

DVD: COURTESY TIMELIFE VIDEO; ILLUSTRATION BY KAGAN MCLEOD

Think he'll do it?
Nah. He might touch the door, but then he'll run faster than the piss down his leg.
-- everyone knows that the Pine house is haunted.

A YEARLY TREAT

You can't change the past, but you can try to put it to rest. A six-page, full color minicomic available now from Hula Cat Comics, written by Sean Frost with art by Wendi Strang-Frost.



Also available:

DOPE FIENDS OF THE ZOMBIE CAFE!

In Dope Fiends of the Zombie Cafe, an experimental, radioactive preservative leaks into Centerville's marijuana crop, initiating the human testing phase ahead of schedule. High school pinball champ Tommy and his best gal Betty Marie must battle beatnik zombies, poetry readings, and mad science. (Suggested for mature readers due to language, graphic violence, and one really bad toupee.)

Michael May of **Comic World News** says: "The book is hilarious. **PLASTIC FARM**'s Rafer Roberts supplies the art and it's obvious that he's enjoying this every bit as much as writer Sean Frost is."

HULA CAT COMICS

PO Box 279
Manchester, MI 48158
http://www.hulacatcomics.com

"Cool Comics For Hep Cats!"

A YEARLY TREAT and DOPE FIENDS OF THE ZOMBIE CAFE! may be purchased online at http://www.hulacatcomics.com via credit card or PayPal. They may also be purchased for $2.00 and $4.00 postage paid, respectively, by sending check or money order to Hula Cat Comics, LLC, PO Box 279, Manchester, MI 48158. The creators may be reached at info@hulacatcomics.com. Groovy.

LUNACHICKS

WHEN THE MOON IS FULL THEY RISE

Aimee Brooks

In The Mood And In Control

There she is, standing seductively on the side of the road. What is it that catches your eye first… the bare midriff, the flowing hair, the thumb jutted out? You ponder too long, and your car barrels past. She pouts. You sigh, but drive on. If only… If only what? Everyone knows how this always ends: Pick up a pretty girl and next thing you know you're being chased by a crazed homicidal maniac in a monster truck, your best friend is missing (presumed in many tiny pieces) and she's screaming her head off.

Such is the peril of being Aimee Brooks, who finds herself in situations like this all the time, if, that is, by "all the time" you mean in *Monster Man*, the newly released DVD from Lions Gate Films. A true horror comedy from Michael Davis, who is fresh to the horror genre, but knows a thing or two about comedy as the force behind *100 Girls* and *Eight Days a Week*, *Monster Man* finds sweet young Aimee on the run from a hideously deformed maniac who opted for a driver's license instead of a chainsaw.

Not surprisingly, Brooks, a veteran of films like *Sorority House Massacre* and *Critters 3*, enthusiastically approves of all this mayhem. "Horror movies are great!" she exclaims. "Every guy should take a girl out to horror movies. It's the best date." Is it really wise, though, to bring a potential mate to see a film where Ms. Brooks spends a good deal of her time in clothes that would make Madonna blush? The young actress laughs at the thought of her *Monster Man* costume. "I don't dress like that in real life, maybe that's why I'm single."

Is that a trick question, Aimee?

Brooks clearly loves the appeal of sex appeal. "I'll keep playing the vamp for as long as I can," she says of her favorite character type. She laughs, adding, "Until I have to play the mom." With earlier turns on *Port Charles* as the girl who "rides into town and tries to steal everyone's boyfriends" and more recently on *Complete Savages* as a pregnant bartender — "How funny is that?!" — Brooks lustily embraces the femme fatale, even in her personal projects. "I'm writing a script, there's definitely a femme fatale in it!"

"When I go to the movies, I don't want reality!

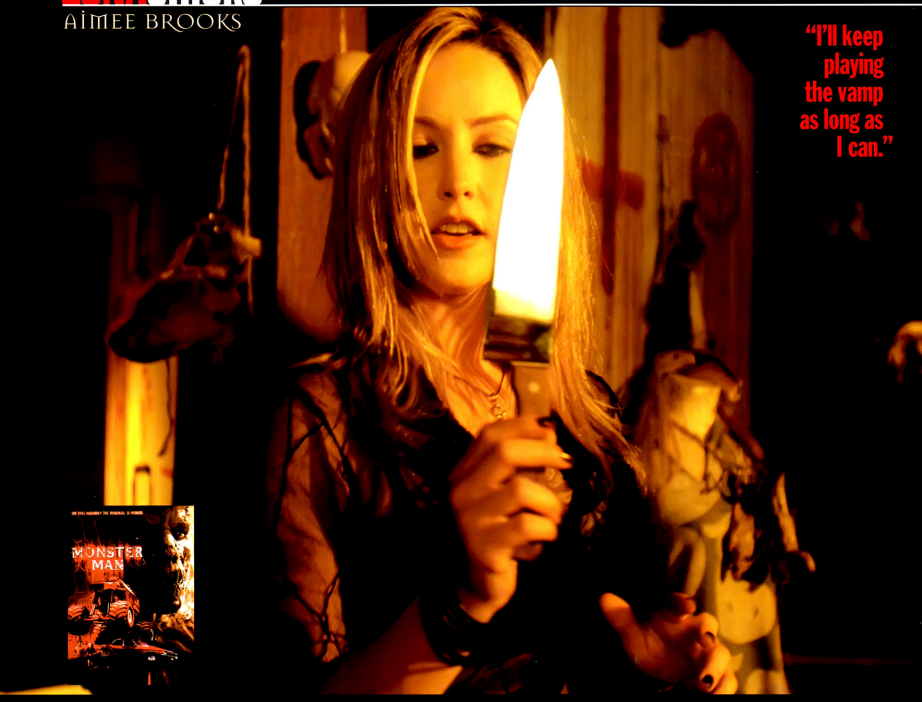
Her favorite scene in *Monster Man* is of a more romantic nature. Well, as romantic as it gets in murderous-monster-truck-driver movies. "The love scene, " she gushes, "it was my first one. Eric's [Jungmann], too. I liked making out with him."

As one might expect for a film like *Monster Man*, this was no ordinary love scene. Slipping down to her bra? No problem, says Brooks. The hard part was mastering the pillow talk: "I didn't get 'Yoda' until the day before [we filmed that scene]."

Wait: *Yoda?* Yes, Yoda. You see, during the sex, Brooks' Sarah breaks into everyone's favorite Jedi Master. Do or do not, there is no try. "[Talking like] Yoda was a big challenge," she admits, though she's proud of the result. "Yeah, I'm thinking of putting that on my reel," she laughs.

It's not all fun and games (and Jedi puppet imitations) for this budding scream queen,

MESSINA BAKER ENTERTAINMENT/ LIONS GATE HORROR



"I'll keep playing the vamp as long as I can."

though. When talk shifts to her recent turn as Felicia Walker in *The Hillside Strangler*, Brooks' voice takes on a hushed reverence. "People don't realize it's a true story," she says of the film, based on the tale of two sadistic cousins, Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, who were convicted of a brutal rape/murder spree in late-70s Los Angeles. (The press at the time insisted upon the singular name, in spite of evidence that the crimes were committed by two men.) "If people don't know about [Bianchi and Buono], they think *Strangler* is just another horror movie. It's not," Brooks insists.

The role presented a number of challenges for the actress. "I play a victim who gets raped and murdered. You don't see the rape," she says, "but you see me tied up, with a look on my face that I know death is coming."

It was a welcome change of pace for Brooks, better known for her ventures in much lighter fare. "I had to do that just to see what it was like, to do the drama [of playing a victim]."

Still, she clearly has a preference for "vamping it up." "When I go to the movies, I don't want reality. Running from a monster truck is *not* reality!" Which is why *Monster Man*, with its fear factor and high levels of the ridiculous, are just what Brooks thinks people crave from their movie experiences: "It's the adrenaline rush."

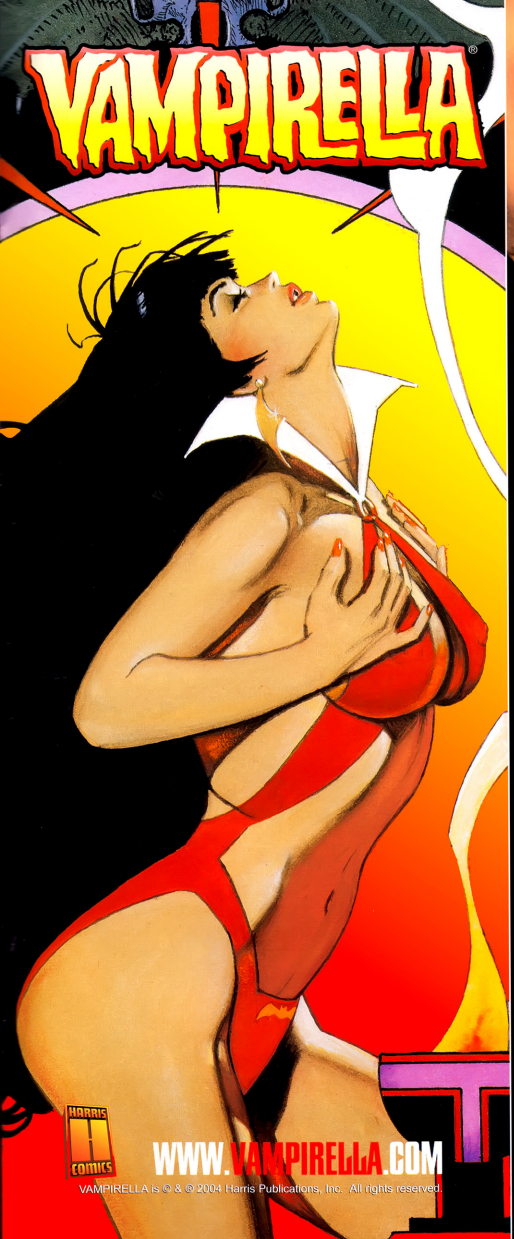
Monster Man hit big with the overseas festivals, says Brooks. "I get a lot of mail from Europe, and they love it. They tested the title there before they had the script and people really responded to it. They'd ask, 'What's it about?'" The only problem? "We [didn't] know yet!" she laughs.

"Scream Queen" gets thrown around these days, but Aimee Brooks is confident that she's got what it takes to lay claim to the title. "I'm a screamer!" she laughs. Still, she's less certain about that *Monster Man* scene: "If I stood by the road dressed like that, do you think I'd get a date? I'd probably make some money…"

Any volunteers to prove Aimee right? Thought so.—*Maureen McTigue with Patrick Keller*

Many women have vied for the Scream Queen crown at conventions, on Halloween, for photo shoots, for the Hell of it—it's been done time and again, with and without the prodding of others. Every month, you can meet one of these women who take their fandom to the next level. If you know of one, share. Send all packages to: **LUNACHICKS,** Vampirella Comics Magazine: 1115 Broadway, 8th floor, New York, NY 10010

VAMPIRELLA®



HARRIS COMICS

WWW.VAMPIRELLA.COM

VAMPIRELLA is © & © 2004 Harris Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

HAUNT YOUR BOOKSHELF

Vampirella Crimson Chronichles Vol. 1 TPB Collects Issues 1-10 of the classic series!

Vampirella Crimson Chronichles Vol. 2 TPB Collects Issues 11-18 of the classic series!

Vampirella Halloween Special New stories by A.Conner, J.Palmiotti & more! 48 pages.

Vampirella Horror Classics HC Collects stories by Morrison, Loeb, Gonzales, Sale, Timm and more!

Item		Quantity	Price
Vampirella Crimson Chronicles V.1	$19.95		
Vampirella Crimson Chronicles V.2	$19.95		
Vampirella Halloween Special	$4.95		
Vampirella Horror Classics Hardcover	$19.95		
Shipping & Handling (US orders only)			
$3.95			
NY state residents add 8.25% tax			
Total			

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

I AM PAYING BY

CHECK ☐ MONEY ORDER ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐

CARD # EXP DATE

SEND YOUR ORDER TO:

VAMPIRELLA LIMITED PREMIUMS
1115 BROADWAY 8TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10010

OR FAX YOUR ORDER TO: 212-620-7787

PLEASE ALLOW 4-6 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY. OFFER EXPIRES 3/31/05

WORLD OF DARKNESS

FICTION CONTEST

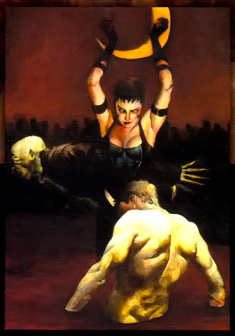
$20,000 IN PRIZES

White Wolf is launching its new fiction line and looking for a crop of hot new writers. Make the cut and you could win big and get your novel published. For details go to:

http://www.worldofdarkness.com/novelcontest

Enter into the Danse Macabre of the undead of Chicago in the new novels based on Vampire: The Requiem. Persephone Moore and Duce Carter seem at odds — she the beautiful progeny of the city's vampiric overlord, he an undead revolutionary firebrand. But both share the endless hunger for blood, the threat of betrayal from supposed allies, and the terror of the slow erosion of their souls. Their stories and more await you in this new series.

A HUNGER LIKE FIRE
by Greg Stolze



WW11235; ISBN 1-58846-862-3; $6.99 US

AVAILABLE IN DECEMBER

BLOOD IN, BLOOD OUT
by Lucien Soulban

WW11237; ISBN 1-58846-866-6; $6.99 US

AVAILABLE IN FEBRUARY

White Wolf, World of Darkness and Vampire are registered trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. Vampire the Requiem, A Hunger Like Fire and Blood In Blood Out are trademarks of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

TALON
りません。
novus
(...THANKS KENZ)